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TWINKLETOES THE DENVER DUDE THE CANADIAN

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THE FILM SPECTATOR

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Coming Up

Old Ironsides will be reviewed in the next Spectator. Also we will endeavor in that issue to uplift the screen by pointing out lessons to be learned from The Flaming Frontier, The Night of Love, the latest Banky-Colman production; New York, Kid Brother, Everybody's Acting, The Snarl of Hate, Summer Bachelors, and any others that defy us by coming to the neighborhood houses which we patronize. If any reckless producer invites us to a preview, we will include it, too.

Clarence Brown Scores a Triumph

YOW that Flesh and Blood is being shown here there will be a general doffing of hats to Clarence Brown. It is one of M.-G.-M.'s program pictures which was kept within its cost and shooting schedules, but it is the only picture that ever played four weeks at the Capitol, New York. Judging solely by my conception of motion picture art I think it is the best thing that Metro ever gave us. It will not have the appeal of The Big Parade or The Fire Brigade, but is a better piece of work than either of them. It is a director's picture. Give Ben Glazer credit for having written a splendid story, and Greta Garbo and Jack Gilbert credit for doing the best work of their careers, and still the major honors for the superb production go to the director. When Brown gave us The Goose Woman he demonstrated his right to be considered among the greatest American directors. Flesh and the Devil raises him still higher. Judging him by both pictures, I could offer no argument in rebuttal if you proclaimed him the greatest. Flesh and the Devil is as colorful and elaborate as The Goose Woman is drab and sordid. Both are highly emotional and in both the emotions are handled with the sureness and sincerity of a master. Brown is a good director and is going to be a better one because he is not hampered by any of the motion picture traditions beyond which the imaginations of most of our other directors can not soar. He simply tells his story, with the writing of which he always has a

great deal to do. Something of his training as an engineer is reflected in the systematic efficiency with which he moves from scene to scene in a story that flickers by without a superfluous foot. But his understanding of human emotions is something that can not be learned at an institution that specializes in producing engineers. In depicting them on the screen he ignores the factor of safety that enters into bridge building. Each emotion is strong enough only to carry its share of the burden of the story. There is no waste energy, not a gesture more than is necessary to make a perfect scene. But there is vigor in Brown's repression, the vigor of a red blood that is pulsing deeply, the surface ruffled only enough to indicate the storm within. It is the kind of direction that makes actors great. More than any other American director, Clarence Brown invests a picture with the proper atmosphere to match the mood of the story. In Flesh and the Devil he displays a pictorial sense comparable only with the qualities in Pommer's pictures that made them popular here. The production is extraordinary for the beauty of its scenes and the businesslike connection between the scenes and the action. Although his characters belong to the titled, wealthy class they are not forever tripping over servants. Occasionally you see a maid or a butler who is necessary to maintain the atmosphere of the story or assist the action, but never anything to cover up a lapse in the story or to provide scenic effects that bear no relation to the story. Brown's production in this picture is like the exquisite work of a master bookbinder whose are registers on the cover the mood of the story which the book contains.

Clarence Scorns Movie Traditions

EFORE dismissing the externals of Flesh and the Devil I would like to pay my respects to Clarence Brown's proficiency in handling ensemble shots. Greta Garbo and Gilbert meet in a park without disturbing the park activity. It is staged splendidly. Strollers pass between the characters and the camera, a policeman saunters by, a perambulator almost runs over Gilbert's toes, in the dim background two saddle horses cross the scene, a man leads a dog across the foreground-dozens of things happen that make you feel that the whole thing is real, but not one thing that distracts your attention from the lovers on the bench. Anyone who has been in a European railway station lives the experience over again in this picture. Brown is not too busy with his drama in the foreground to overlook the background in which a porter touches his hat to the station master, a man hails a cab and a woman collects her luggage. It is easy enough to put action in an ensemble shot, but Brown puts it in in a manner that is convincing. He applies his engineering efficiency to the story itself. He does not bother us with non-essentials. The opening sequence takes place in a military institution of some sort in which Gilbert and Lars Hanson are something or other in uniforms. We are not told what the institution is, what the young fellows are doing in it, or even what city or country it is in -and we don't care, for such details have nothing to do with the story. But you know and I know that almost any other director in the business would have opened with a title reading something like this: "In the Bimberger School of Infantry, where German gentlemen are made

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into German officers, and situated on the River Rhine, three miles east of Hootsiedoodle, there are two young men, one a son of a Scotch Presbyterian minister, and the other the offspring of a union of a hand-organ grinder and his second cousin."-all of which would have nothing to do with the story, but would be shown in deference to movie traditions. As I said, Brown scoffs at traditions. He puts his characters on a train and never tells us where they are going, or why. It makes no difference, for we go with them and soon learn that they are going home. When he wishes to introduce John Smith he has a character speaking the title, "It's a fine day, John Smith," and we know who John Smith is. But despite the dearth of information that Clarence gives us there is nothing obscure about the story. Everything we need to know to help to an understanding of it is spread before us. It moves by quickly, each scene the logical sequel to the preceding one. There are not a great many titles, as there is no occasion for them, for Brown has the ability to tell a story with action, and to compose beautiful scenes with which to tell it. The photography in Flesh and the Devil is a splendid example of the high degree of art that can be reached with the camera, and Brown was fortunate in having such an artist as William Daniels to turn the crank. The art direction of Codric Gibbons and Frederick Hope enriched the production until it is one of the most satisfying to the discriminating eye that ever have been produced in an American studio.

"Flesh and Devil" Great Work of Art

ECAUSE I put the leading of a dog across a scene before a reference to the emotions with which Flesh and the Devil deals, I do not wish to convey the impression that I consider their relative importance in that order. I merely dismissed the obvious features of the picture before approaching its soul. This picture is great, not for the qualities I have mentioned, but for those I yet have to deal with. It is an inspiring story of a great friendship, a friendship which ennobles two young men and is the biggest thing in their lives. Gradually the screen is learning things it should have known years ago. Stella Dallas teaches it that mother love had been a neglected subject. Beau Geste teaches it that brotherly love is a good film theme. Flesh and the Devil teaches it that there is a good story in friendship. There are a lot of other good themes lying around unused, but one by one they will be clubbed into the heads of producers. Brown never forgets that his picture is the story of a friendship. A passionate love story runs through it, but we never lose sight of the friendship. There is a glorious ending-too good to tell you what it is. But it gives one renewed faith in the future of the magnificent art to the advancement of which The Spectator is dedicated and the activities of so many of its readers devoted. The ending is logical, not "happy." Under Brown's direction the acting of the principals is sincere and convincing. Jack Gilbert returns from exile in Africa to find that the woman whom he loves passionately has married his friend. He takes the blow standing up-a magnificent example of acting. He has a smile and a handclasp for his friend. He is true to their youthful pact. But a time comes when he has stood all he can. He lets go, and we have some more acting, equally notable, but greatly different. Greta Garbo

has a similar outburst, human, logical, revealing her powers as they seldom have been revealed. Lars Hanson, always repressed, always the master of his emotions, gives a performance that more firmly fixes his place among real screen actors. George Fawcett, that brilliant veteran who never fails us, gains further laurels in this picture, and Eugenie Besserer is a sympathetic and appealing mother, duplicating the success she achieved in The Fire Brigade. Barbara Kent, a winsome young miss, whom I can not recall having seen before, rises to the heights demanded by several strong scenes. Flesh and the Devil has some of the best love scenes yet seen on the screen. Clarence Brown has the good taste to stage such scenes in places that provide the lovers with some seclusion. Henry King in Barbara Worth has Vilma Banky going into Ronald Colman's arms in full view of a multitude, which not only is bad taste, but is poor drama, for it robs love of the delicious thrill that is accentuated by the privacy that envelops it. There is but one witness to but one of the love scenes between Miss Garbo and Gilbert. Unfortunately for them, but essential to the story, is the fact that the witness is Greta's husband. But I can not go on enumerating the virtues of Flesh and the Devil. It would occupy too much space. But I must not overlook a word of praise for Marion Ainslee's titles, which stick strictly to the job of telling the story, even if at times they wander from the path of correct punctuation. Considering the picture as a whole I hereby give it a fixed place on my list of ten best pictures for 1927. It is too much to hope that there will be ten others that would displace it. Months ago I recorded in The Spectator my respect for Clarence Brown as a director. That respect has deepened. Only a truly great director could elevate a program picture to one of the greatest works of art ever produced in a motion picture studio. My hat is off to the man who did it.

Erich Pommer and American Pictures

THE thoughtful person contemplating motion pictures must arrive at the conclusion that the most interesting person connected with them is Erich Pommer. It is Pommer's relation to pictures, not his personality, that makes him interesting. For all I know to the contrary he may have an interesting personality, but it is his works, not the man, that we are interested in. While he was director-general of UFA that organization turned out scores of pictures that had so little merit that they could not be shown at a profit in this country. The company produced pictures so rapidly that it was not humanly possible for Pommer to give personal attention to all of them. At least such is my conclusion after reading in an English paper a review of UFA activities during the last year that Pommer was with it. However, while he was picture-making in Europe Pommer gave personal attention to every detail of the production of six pictures. We have seen five of them in this country-The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Last Laugh, Variety, Waltz Dream, and Faust. The sixth, Metropolis, a million dollar production, we are to see. Five different directors made these pictures, but the whole half dozen reflect but one mind, that of Pommer, establishing it as the greatest picture mind in the world. His five pictures that have been shown here have given us a new conception of screen art. ConPage Four

sidered as a group, they are the greatest contribution ever made to the advancement of that art. From the flambouyant treatment of the passionate story in Variety, the theatrical use of the camera, consistent with the telling of a theatrical story; to the lofty and inspired treatment of the Faust story, rising to sublime heights to match the majesty of the theme, covers an extraordinary range of expression and fixes the place of the screen among the high arts. Pommer came to Hollywood to make pictures for Famous Players-Lasky, a company in a position to have given him all the intellectual and technical co-operation that a combing of the world would bring to light. Hampered as he was in Europe by the necessity of keeping within the financial restrictions of his organization, he made a record unequalled by any other producer in the world; unhampered in this country he could rise to greater heights and lend still further dignity to screen art. Will he be unhampered? In the answer to that question lies the reason why Erich Pommer is the most interesting man in pictures. That he was hampered is the only possible construction to put on his break with Paramount.

Can Our System Assimilate Genius?

OTION pictures are organized in this country so that it is difficult for a definite personality to register itself. Many times in The Spectator I have recorded my high opinion of B. P. Schulberg as a producer, and certainly he is one of the finest fellows in the business. He it is under whom Pommer was working in this country. I know of no American who has a better picture mind that Schulberg, but he is part of the American system of making pictures, a multiple mind system that robs productions of all individuality. An American system that does not permit an American unhampered expression on the screen scarcely will readjust itself to grant the privilege to a foreigner. Several times I have charged the industry with an inability to learn by experience. I believe Pommer's success abroad will mean nothing to Hollywood. He was induced to come here on account of his extraordinary achievements in Germany under a certain system, and was expected to duplicate those achievements under another system that was forced on him. His presence here puts on trial our method of making pictures. Can this method assimilate a real artist and allow such artist to express himself? I doubt it. If Pommer's American-made pictures do not possess the merit of those he made in Germany it will be our system's fault, for the six pictures that I enumerated in the preceding paragraph remove any doubt of his ability. We have several one-picture men in this country, but none who has turned out six which have arrested the attention of the world. Pommer has supervised two pictures here, Hotel Imperial and Barbed Wire, both starring Pola Negri. The former is the better motion picture, but the latter will have greater audience appeal. While both will rank among the foremost pictures of the year, neither comes up to the standard set by The Last Laugh, Variety or Faust. They do not possess the same artistic appeal as the German-made ones and will not be regarded as such valuable contributions to screen art. But in the two, in which he had the assistance of such capable directors as Mortiz Stiller and Rowland Lee, Pommer reveals to us again the brilliancy of Pola Negri as an actress. That much he has done, something that American directors without his supervision have been unable to do in the years that have elapsed between the arrivals of Pola and Pommer in this country. He also has made his two pictures notable for the pictorial excellence that characterized those which he made abroad. That both of them would have been better pictures if he had been allowed the same freedom he enjoyed in Germany seems a reasonable presumption.

One That Pommer Made in Hollywood

ARBED WIRE is a succession of beautiful scenes. exquisite works of art such as Pommer always uses in telling his stories. Bert Glennon's camera work reaches the high degree of excellence he achieved in Hotel Imperial. The lighting is particularly effective and Rowland Lee is to be commended for his sense of composition. The direction all the way through is masterly. One sequence is particularly notable for its depth of human appeal. It opens with a shot showing the German and French soldiers fraternizing in No Man's Land, the spell of the Christmas spirit blotting out animosities engendered by the war. Later we see how the prison camp celebrates Christmas, the whole sequence being handled in an impressive manner. The story of Barbed Wire is an adaptation by Jules Furthman of Hall Caine's "A Woman of Knockelow". The original is a story of an English girl falling in love with a German incarcerated in a prison camp on the Isle of Man. The picture places the camp in France and makes the girl French, keeping Pola Negri more in character, as there is nothing about her to suggest the English. She gives a remarkable performance, responding nobly to Lee's direction. Pola is a superb actress. The story sags in the middle, probably due more to faulty editing than to any weakness in the story itself. There is nothing the matter with the scenes, for there is not a poorly presented sequence in the whole production, but for perhaps a reel there is little to hold the interest of an audience which derives its entertainment from the story and none from beautiful scenes capably directed. Undoubtedly a great deal of thought was expended on the ending, and while I did not like it, I can not suggest how it could have been improved. Inherently the ending has great strength. Her neighbors are incensed at the French girl for declaring her love for the German, splendidly played by Clive Brook, who is ideal in the part, and are on the point of driving her from home when her brother, blinded in the war, appears. The physically sightless man is the only one who can see the folly of the senseless antagonism, and he makes a long speech, broken into several titles, that are good propaganda, but poor motion picture entertainment. It makes the ending drag. But the picture as a whole is a splendid example of screen art, notwithstanding its few deficiencies, and demonstrates the wisdom of Paramount's action in securing the great picture mind of Erich Pommer to supervise its foreign players, and the folly of not retaining him to continue it. Clyde Cooke plays a comedy party in a manner that makes it one of the big features of the picture. Those splendid artists, Claude Gillingwater and Gustav von Seyffertitz contribute perfect performances, and Einar Hanson, as Pola's brother, adds to the merits of the picture. There is one extraordinary shot showing the dead traversing a cloudy thoroughfare that is a monument to the technical genius of Roy Pomeroy.

One That Pommer Made in Germany

AUST is the work of an unrestrained Pommer, working under a system which he dominated. It is a magnificent achievement, with a depth of spirituality which American producers seldom attain. It is too intellectual to match Barbed Wire in audience appeal, consequently under the industry's dollar standard it will be rated as inferior to that picture, but if I were in the producing business I would rather have to my credit one Faust than a dozen Barbed Wires. A picture like Faust adds to the hardships of a reviewer's life. It makes our ordinary run of pictures appear so trivial. To consider it and Twinkletoes as products of the same method of expression is to put the Colleen Moore picture under a heavy load. I have seen quite a number of pictures since I viewed Faust and I looked at all of them with the eyes that beheld the majesty of the German production, while still under the spell of that extraordinary artistic triumph and with the new conception of the screen that it gave me. It has created within me a feeling of discontent with our factory-made product that might have entertained me if I had not seen Faust. But Faust itself is not without blemish. Like Barbed Wire, it sags in the middle, but when the real tragedy of its love story begins to develop, it sweeps onward to a great ending in a manner that earns my unbounded respect for the picture mind responsible for it. It is a simple love story that might have had Hollywood for its locale, or Amsterdam or Calcutta, but it has the glamour of an old-time setting, the romance of clothes that used to be worn, story-book architecture and scenery that an artist dreamed. The major fault of Faust is that it is done too well. There is so much of it that it over-feeds the aesthetic sense and dulls the power of appreciation. I believe the ideal way to see it would be to make two trips, viewing half of it one night and half the next. It would tend to better digestion of its merits. Like all the Pommer pictures, including the two he has made here, it reveals an extraordinary blending of beauty and drama. There is not a shot in Faust that is not a wonderful example of composition, lighting and photography used effectively to maintain the atmos-

An established reputation for handling the greatest variety of the finest silks.



BOLGER'S

6510-6514 Hollywood Boulevard 7615 Sunset Boulevard phere of the production and to advance the story. I can not recall the exact words in the main title which characterize Faust as a poem in pictures, or something to that effect. That is exactly what it is—an exquisite piece of poetry, related on the screen by its master poet, and to enjoy it to the uttermost you must so regard it. It is more than a drama of a great love, more than a story of supreme emotion. It is a product of the newest art that unfolds to us the limitless possibilities of that art when its expression is left to the free exercise of a brain that understands more than any other the extent of the possibilities.

"Faust" Has Great Intellectual Appeal

AUST was directed by F. W. Murnau, who directed The Last Laugh also. In this country we know of nothing notable he has done without Pommer's supervision. He is making a picture in Hollywood for Fox and not until it is released can we measure his real ability as a director. All we know of his work here thus far is that he already has exceeded his shooting schedule by a couple of months or so and is proceeding cautiously. We know that Du Pont, made famous as the director of Variety, failed deplorably in his first effort to make a picture in Hollywood without Pommer's co-operation. The most notable work of five different foreign directors being under Pommer's supervision makes logical the conclusion that the chief credit for the notable work must belong to him. I credit him with the virtues of Faust as I have no way of knowing how much Murnau contributed to them. M.-G.-M., in Americanizing Faust, failed to give Pommer any credit for it, his name not appearing on the screen. Even Paramount, which had him under contract, omits giving him screen credit for supervising Barbed Wire. The immensity of the letters that record Rowland Lee's name as its director perhaps left no room for the mention of Pommer as supervisor. It is a called a Lee-Pommer production, without stating what Pommer had to do with it, an oversight that did not embrace the art director, photographer and others. Probably nothing smaller, nothing betraying the characteristic meanness of some of our picture minds, than Metro's deliberate slighting of Pommer's contribution to Faust, ever has disgraced an art. But when we compare Pommer with those responsible for the slight it becomes laughable. If some of the people who control American pictures had a sense of humor they would die laughing at themselves. Emil Jannings' characterization in The Last Laugh was not such as to develop all the sympathy the part might have called forth, but in Faust he gives a magnificent performance that is comparable with the best work of our American actors. Camila Horn is the Marguerite of our dreams -young, blonde and beautiful, so unlike the hefty sopranos who generally sing the part. The Faust of Gustav Eckmann is in every way adequate. But it is not the acting that makes Faust a great picture. It is the extraordinary breadth of the conception, the amazing production given it and the intellectual treatment of the theme. Even those who think the story drags can not fail to be impressed by the artistic qualities of the picture, and its appearance on American screens will have a tendency to make us demand similar excellence in the works of our own studios. That Paramount realized this

was indicated by its action in securing Pommer, Jannings and other foreigners, but that under the American system Pommer would be able to duplicate here the triumphs he achieved abroad I never for a moment believed. Art, to achieve its ultimate, must be the free expression of its creator, and the wisdom of allowing an intellect to express itself freely on the screen is something that we not yet have learned in this country. When we grow big enough to learn it Pommer may give us an American-made Faust.

Screen's Progress Helped by Germans

THATEVER advancement has been made in the technic, lighting and photograping of motion pictures during the past ten years has been the work of Germans. Only a few of their pictures have been outstanding successes in this country because they devoted most of their attention to the science of picture-making, and little to the entertainment value of their stories. Meanwhile in this country the reverse has been the rule. We give all our attention to stories and so little to the method of presenting them that all of them are alike. Pommer came to this country two years ago, went through our studios, noted our way of doing things and then returned home and so improved upon our methods that he has sent us the best half dozen pictures standing to the credit of any man in the world. In our studios we have people capable of doing everything that Pommer has done, but they are not allowed to do it and our pictures are kept down to the dead level of the capacity of our supervisors, not more than two or three of whom know anything about pictures. In any other line of human endeavor the coming of such a master as Pommer would have been welcomed cordially by those whose co-worker he was to be. He would have received the heartiest cooperation of those who were in a position to profit from contact with him or from observation of the results he accomplished. But the motion picture business is like none other on earth. When Pommer arrived he was not allowed to do the things he was brought over here to do. There is nothing else to deduce from his split with Paramount. I know nothing of the inside story of the disagreement. All I know is what I read in the papers, statements by both the studio and Pommer to the effect that they parted with the most cordial relations still existing between them, giving us occasion to thank the man who thought up the new meaning for the word "applesauce". I have no personal interest in Pommer, the individual. But I am interested in Pommer, the artist, because he is the biggest artist that pictures have produced. It was unthinkable that he should turn his back on Hollywood and by returning to Germany proclaim to the world that this community, that prides itself on being the film capital of the world, has no place within its borders for the greatest film mind in the world. It is to the credit of the industry that Pommer no sooner had left Paramount than he was deluged with offers of other alliances.

Every day or so I read that some film player, who is a subscriber to The Spectator, has left for the East to make a picture. I would like all of them to know that it is no trouble for us to forward their Spectators to them while they are away.

Has All the Things That Screen Can't Do

NY producer will give you a list of the things you can not do on the screen. The list is getting shorter. Stella Dallas, removed mother love from among the things the public simply won't stand for; Beau Geste blotted out brotherly love and Flesh and the Devil will wipe friendship off the list. Among the remaining things that you can not do is the assembling of three men and a woman on a dust-laden ranch in Arizona during a drought, and in three interiors and a few drab exteriors work out a story that will interest anyone. Any producer will tell you that that can't be done and he would be apt to shoot any author who submitted such a story. However, William K. Howard tackled such a story and has made a picture that will create a lot of talk. He has done all the impossible things, but if White Gold is not a success it will surprise me. Briefly, this is the story: Kenneth Thompson marries Jetta Goudal and takes her to his father's ranch. The father, George Nichols, hates her; George Bancroft comes along as a ranch hand; the drought continues: the springs on Nichol's rocking chair creak; there is dust on everything; nerves are taut; Bancroft enters Jetta's room at night when the husband is absent; she shoots him; the father, knowing his son will believe him and not his wife, says that he shot Bancroft, having discovered him in Jetta's room. Jetta is silent. dened because her husband did not have enough faith in her to make it unnecessary for her to defend herself, she leaves the ranch—and that is the end of the story. To make a picture out of it was a brave thing for Bill Howard to attempt, and he scores a signal success even though he does not get all the possibilities out of the story. Perhaps Garrett Fort and Tay Garnett did not write everything into the story that might have been written in. They did not make the most of the real menace in the story—the drought, nor did they dramatize the rain when the drought ends. But I saw the picture in a projectionroom and I believe some things were done to it after I viewed it, so I had better be careful in criticizing it for lacking something it may now contain. White Gold is a picture that is a distinct contribution to the science of making pictures. Howard takes impossible scenes and situations and makes a thoroughly intelligent picture out of them. It is a picture that no student of the screen can afford to miss. It reflects the greatest credit on Howard. He is one of our youngest directors, but he is going to be heard from. He is too much in love with his work to fail at it. He has intelligence and daring, and the daring director is the only one who will do things of value to the screen as an art. Howard even was daring enough to direct Jetta Goudal-once.

"White Gold" Was A Bold Undertaking

HITE GOLD was a bold undertaking because it is a story solely of emotions, its characters restricted to one spot, and with no action in it. The biggest scene is one showing Jetta, Nichols and Thompson sitting at a table. Howard directs them with rare intelligence. They scarcely move, holding your interest only by the expressions on their faces, with the help of an occasional title when one is necessary to assist in the

interpretation of their thoughts. In such a scene, of course, close-ups are necessary, but Howard does not overdo them as nearly all directors do. White Gold would have been a still better picture if there had been a more accommodating actress in the only feminine role. Jetta Goudal has ability, but she exercises it only in close-ups. I do not know what is going to happen to her when all the directors on the De Mille lot in turn have directed her, for none of them will take her on a second time. She has a perverted sense of her importance in the screen world, or such a queer conception of her obligations to her employers that no picture in which she appears is as good as it would be if some sensible person of even less ability played her part. Her ability not being outstanding, I can not understand why any producer bothers with her. I expect to be invited to a grand celebration on the De Mille lot to mark the termination of her contract. The acting honors in White Gold belong to George Nichols, the veteran character actor. His hatred for his son's bride is unreasonable; he is morose and taciturn, and continually rocks in his squeaky chair in a maddening manner. Nichols gives a splendid interpretation of such a character, being particularly effective in one long close-up in which he registers his fear of looking his daughter-in-law in the eye. Young Thompson is an acceptable leading man, being sincere and convincing. George Bancroft handles his part with his usual thoroughness, but in his last sequence would have looked better if he had not used the greasy make-up similar to that which makes McLaglen and Lowe look almost disgusting in What Price Glory? I suppose this repulsive make-up means something to somebody, but to me it is only something that spoils a scene. Bancroft starts off on an amorous adventure with his face almost dripping with grease, a queer fancy for the wooing of someone else's bride. On aesthetic as well as moral grounds Jetta had a valid excuse for shooting him. Clyde Cook adds some fine comedy touches to the picture. Anton Grot, the art director, dresses the production in a garb that matches its mood, and John W. Krafft and John Farrow contribute a set of satisfactory titles. The production was supervised by C. Gardner Sullivan, edited by Jack Dennis and photographed by Lucien Andriott. Marion Orth's continuity was a fine piece of work. White Gold is somewhat revolutionary and is done so well that it suggests a brilliant future for Bill Howard. Unless I miss my guess he is a young man who will go a long way.

"Twinkletoes" Is Shy on Twinkles

WINKLETOES was well underway when I dropped in on it. The first scene I saw was one in which Warner Oland was attempting to get the best of Colleen Moore. I did not know what it was all about, but I was impressed by the acting of Colleen in the struggle which followed. She lets herself go and expresses fear and hate with all the passion a Negri could put into a scene. It is a bit good enough for the most dramatic production. Oland, of course, is fine in it—a habit he has. Then followed a glimpse of that splendid character actor, Lucien Littlefield, and in a few more feet came the end. Plenty of action, capable direction, good lighting and photography, a fine cast—and yet I had heard that Twinkletoes was a very poor picture. What I had seen

of it certainly gave me the impression that it was well worth while, and I awaited the front end of it with confidence. When finally I had seen all of it I discovered that all its virtues are in its last reel. Taken as a whole it is an extremely tiresome picture, worse than anything else in which Colleen has appeared. The locale being the Limehouse district in London, it is as foreign to us as the scenes in which Faust is played. There is as much story in it as there is in Variety or The Waltz Dream. First National has money enough to secure the best of everything for a Colleen Moore production, and Colleen can act quite well enough to keep up her end in any company. Why, then, did John McCormick fail to give us a picture that would measure up with Pommer's best? The answer is easy. Pommer applies intellect to his pictures and Twinkletoes is a product of established movie methods. No picture that was the result of deep thinking could contain so many senseless close-ups as Twinkletoes contains. They were quite enough in themselves to spoil any production. Whoever was responsible for them does not understand the fundamentals of making pictures, nor has he any sense of drama. The author wrote a scene describing the manner in which the girl confesses her love for the man. She mounts the steps leading to her home while the man stands at the bottom and urges her to come down to him. She goes a little way, stops, turns, descends a few steps, mounts again, hesitates, then slowly descends and goes into his arms. Directed intelligently it could have been a strong scene. It should have been shown in a long shot without a camera change, the man at the bottom of the stairs, the girl at the top, both at all times in sight of the audience, which is interested only in whether she is going to him and not at all in the expressions on their faces. The important feature of the scene is the relation of the characters to one another. The moment there is a cut to a close-up of either of them this relationship is lost sight of. But the entire scene is shown in close-ups, demonstrating that the makers of the picture did not understand it. This lack of intelligence in the use of close-ups is in evidence throughout the entire production. On every hand you hear Colleen's acting criticized on the score that she smirks and grins too much. The criticism is just, but the fault is not hers. In each of her pictures are dozens of close-ups of her for which there is no excuse whatever. They are lessening her box office value by giving the public a wrong impression of her acting ability. But I suppose we will continue to have them.

Suffers From a Great Many Ills

PICTURE made by people who do not know what close-ups are for can not be expected to reveal intelligence in the handling of its less obvious features. Twinkletoes has many other weaknesses. There are perhaps a dozen scenes which have nothing to do with the story, and having no virtues in themselves serve only to retard it. The only reason for them that I could see was to provide footage into which could be cut some more close-ups of Colleen. The characterizations of Oland and Littlefield were perfect, but poor Tully Marshall, as Colleen's father, was made to behave as no father on earth ever behaved. Every time he and Colleen got within clinching distance they grabbed one another and hugged

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and kissed. I have two daughters for whom I have as much paternal love as a screen father need be endowed with, but if both of them together pawed me half as much as Colleen paws Tully I would take such drastic measures to prevent it that I might become liable to a charge of cruelty. Neither fathers nor daughters act as both are made to do in Twinkletoes, direction that makes a large contribution to the general unreality of the picture. A street fight attracts a crowd which does not surround the combatants as an ordinary street crowd would. It leaves one side open for the camera. Charles Brabin, who directed the picture, might ask me how the camera could record the fight if the crowd surrounded it. By having an energetic spectator make the crowd describe a large circle, which could be planted in a long shot, moving the camera within the circle to get the medium shots of the fight. But, in any event, any scene that can not be shown on the screen exactly as it would be in real life never should be photographed. There is a similar lapse in the direction of a theatre sequence. Colleen is doing her stuff on the stage and the excited chorus girls assemble in the wings to watch her. They do not cluster as they would in real life. They stand in parallel lines, to permit a shot being taken between them to register their interest and to show Colleen on the stage in the distance. With the camera stationed in an opposite wing Colleen could have been shown in the foreground and the girls grouped naturally in the background. As the picture has it, it is a striking example of unintelligent direction. whole theatre sequence is ridiculous. We see all that Twinkletoes does on the stage. She dances very nicely, quite well enough to please a tough Limehouse audience, but not well enough to arouse the tremendous and sustained enthusiasm that the audience registers. The picture audience, having seen her act, knows this. And it has nothing to do with the story. Her success or failure as a dancer is not what the story is about. It is all very silly, serving only as an excuse for several more closeups of Colleen smiling. It may interest Brabin and Mc-Cormick to know that men in Limehouse audiences keep their hats on in music halls. In the picture they take them off. And if Twinkletoes is such a favorite that men break up the show clamoring for her appearance, how do you explain a title in a previous sequence which says that often there is little in her house to eat? A headliner who is three-sheeted throughout the neighborhood ought to draw down enough to beat Old Mother Hubbard in a cupboard contest. I have pointed out quite enough to show why Twinkletoes is not a notable picture. And it might have been. In itself it has everything necessary to the making of a picture out of the ordinary. It falls down because it did not have intelligent treatment.

Elinor Glyn Picks Winner

HEN a group of four or five people enters a room it is not unusual that one of them attracts more attention than all the others. All may conduct themselves alike, they may look pretty much alike, wearing clothes of equal attractiveness, but one of them will draw the eyes of the majority of lookers-on. He or she is the one with that strange quality, personality. It is something that no one acquires consciously. It remained for Elinor Glyn to put it on the screen, to dramatize it,

even though undramatically. Perhaps she will do it over again in something bigger and stronger than It, which is a delightful comedy, but which only scratches the surface of the possibilities of the theme. Madame Glyn in It deals with but one variation of the theme, personality with a sex appeal attachment. At least, I suppose that that is what her "it" is. She seems to have perplexed the world as much as Dr. Einstein did with his theory of relativity. While we don't know what the two of them discovered, we are quite ready to believe in the existence of the things they discovered. But there is a bigger "it" than a shopgirl's which lands her a rich husband. There is the "it" of the man of power, who can do tremendous things by sheer force of his personality. A strong drama could be based on it, and I hope Madame Glyn undertakes to write it, for she should not allow anyone else to exploit her discovery. When she first thought of the story for the picture It she told it to Ben Schulberg. He thought it a great idea and told her to go ahead. He assigned Clarence Badger to direct it. Badger took to the idea enthusiastically. So far, so good. Then a peculiar thing arose. No one else on the Paramount lot could see any merit in the idea, which, in essence, was to make a motion picture about the thing motion picture artists must have to make motion pictures successful personality. The selling end of the organization in New York thought it a nutty idea and opposed the making of such a picture. But Madame Glyn, Schulberg and Badger stuck stubbornly to their conviction that they had a winner, and it has turned out that they were right. It is interesting chiefly for revealing to us a new Elinor Glyn, one with an amusing taste in comedy and who can entertain us for the full length of a feature picture that does not have a single tiger skin in it. It adds strength to my argument in the last Spectator that Madame Glyn has a picture mind and that the screen is a better medium of expression for her than literature. We always will get better pictures from writers who have learned screen technic than from screen technicians who try to write.

Nothing in "It" to Make You Mad

EALING with the subject of authors in pictures in the last issue, I said that when authors supervised the making of pictures based on their stories we would have no more pictures that would make us mad, even though there might be many that we do not like. Such pictures would be free from all the absurdities that are so much in evidence now. It is a picture supervised by the writer of its story and there is nothing in it that affronts the intelligence. Even those who do not like it can not charge it with being illogical, silly or senseless, ills which afflict so many screen offerings. But I can not imagine anyone not liking it. The story has been told many times before on the screen, but this time it has been motivated differently and the whole thing has been treated so intelligently that it is delightful entertainment. Of course there are the usual senseless close-ups, which can be attributed to the editing and not to the story or the direction. Tony Moreno, William Austin and the captain of a yacht stand close together on deck and talk. It is shown entirely in close-ups, losing all its pictorial value. A group of three smartly dressed men on the deck of a trim yacht gives the cameraman an opportunity to pro-

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duce an artistic scene, but if he made such a shot it was discarded in favor of some close-ups that mean nothing whatever. In another scene two women call on Tony in his office and to bring the three of them within a medium shot Clarence Badger packs them together on the side of the desk where Tony sits and where visitors to his office would not go. They would face him across the desk. You will notice in any picture that Erich Pommer makes the characters are grouped naturally and the camera has to shoot the scene any way it can. Most American directors do their grouping to accommodate the camera, which is why we have so many things that look just like motion pictures, instead of the bits of real life that Pommer gives us. In all the rest of his direction Badger shows that he entered completely into the spirit of the story and he makes a good picture out of it. Clara Bow, of course, is captivating. I can imagine no one else in the part. Moreno never did better in a light role. The beach sequence, in which he and Clara have the time of their lives on the amusement devices, goes over big because the two of them seem really to be enjoying them-Badger realized that joy is contagious and directed the sequence in a manner that makes the audience get as much fun out of it as the characters did. But as Clara and Tony played themselves, I believe the acting honors of It belong to William Austin, who played a character part. He has done well in a great many bits without previously having given a casting director the idea that he could do well a lot of bits in one picture. In It he has a big part-in effect a lot of bits-and adds immeasurably to the entertainment value of the picture. It is to be hoped that hereafter he will be recognized as a comedian to be featured. It was quite an inspiration on the part of someone to have Madame Glyn herself appear in a sequence. It is a touch which in itself will have a lot to do with the success of the picture. There must be many millions of people in the world curious about the appearance of so famous a woman and It will satisfy their curiosity. I wonder if she has "it".

"The Denver Dude" Is Rather a Dud

TOOT Gibson's latest is The Denver Dude, a Western farce that has precious little to recommend it except Hoot's own good natured personality. No doubt it will appeal to his regular list of customers and perhaps that is all that it is supposed to do. But just why do they make so many Westerns that by no possibility can appeal to people of intelligence? And, if a Western, why not maintain the Western atmosphere? In this picture Blanche Mahaffey, a very dainty little girl, strolls around a corral in gowns that would grace the terrace at Monte Carlo, and lives in a ranch house whose interior would be ostentatious in a Newport cottage. She and her mother, or aunt, or somebody, dress for a barbecue as elaborately as if they were going to be presented at court. I grant that it is good movie stuff to show beautiful gowns, but to make the roasting of an ox the reason for superlative dolling up is a weird bit of movie license. Also we have a Boston man wearing a silk hat on the ranch. And an old man who, a title explains, was born in this country to save the fare over, wears kilts and talks a brand of Scotch that will make it unsafe to show the picture in Scotland. The title writer's conception of Scotch dialect is something extraordinary. The inviolable rule that you must have the love element in a motion picture is satisfied in The Denver Dude with a ready-made romance that required no working up whatever. It just is, although the two parties to it hadn't met since they were children. There is one quaint bit of comedy. A woman looking for her husband is told that he is dead, a funny idea in itself, but it becomes screaming when she is told that he broke his leg and had to be shot. Another good idea in a movie is to have the hero protect the reputation of the heroine. Although there is not the slightest reason why Hoot should not tell the father that the daughter opened the safe and may know what happened to the missing money, he stubbornly refuses to do so, entailing upon himself the necessity of fleeing before the sheriff gets there. Blanche opened the safe to get her necklace for the barbecue, for no refined Western girl would outrage ranch conventions by appearing at a big barbecue without a necklace, but a shot in the barbecue sequence shows her not only minus the necklace, but also without the diamonds and pearls she previously had worn when she went to inspect a bull. Some bandits shoot a bus driver in this picture. Personally, I hold the belief that shooting bus drivers should come under the heading of light diversion, but the statutes look at it differently and when one is shot a sheriff, or a policeman, or someone, sooner or later hears about it and becomes agitated. Nothing like that happens in this picture. But when Bob McKim steals some money and they think Hoot did it, a sheriff is dug up pronto. If The Denver Dude had not contained these few faults, and if a different story had been written for it, it might have been a pretty good picture. However, it is no worse than the ordinary run of Westerns and if you do not apply the rule of reason to it you may get some fun out of it. But if you do apply the rule of reason you will get a devil of a lot more, but not the same kind. (Hoot told me that if he liked my review of The Denver Dude he'd subscribe for The Spectator.)

Hoot Gibson and Douglas Fairbanks

F COURSE, my feelings for The Denver Dude may have been influenced somewhat by the presence of someone in the seat behind me who chewed gum with vulgar ostentation and disgusting and audible persistency. But I do not believe that even without the mushy obligato I could have witnessed with approval a scene showing Hoot and his father meeting after a separation of five years. Although an early scene registers the father's pride in his son, the two come together near the end of the picture and do not exchange a handclasp or a word. They do not even look at one another. When Reeves Eason directed the scene he simply forgot that a reunion was due, but how did it get beyond the projection-room? One of the weird things about Westerns is the habit producers have of making them so silly that they can not appeal to anyone who thinks. Such pictures have spoiled one of the most profitable fields that producers could exploit. Western pictures could be shown to-day in the biggest first-run houses and would be recognized as among the screen headliners if they had not degenerated into the wholly impossible things that masquerade under their name. They have the whole outPage Ten February 5, 1927

doors as a background, the glorious scenery that our West can boast, red blooded men and women, elemental emotions, deeds of daring, great riding, great thrills-everything that a motion picture audience could ask for. They could provide the kind of entertainment that would thrill the moron and intrigue the intelligentsia, enjoying the widest appeal of any class of pictures, if only brains were exercised in their making. Charlie Rogers recognizes this, and, with Ken Maynard as star, is turning out Westerns with common sense stories. The Overland Stage is entertaining enough to please any audience on earth. I told Douglas Fairbanks the other day that a real Western should be his next picture. It was after a luncheon at which Dr. Hugo Reisenfeldt and I had as our opponents in an argument Doug, Joe Schenck and Fred Niblo, and I did not have sufficient eloquence left to uphold vigorously my contention about the Western, but I since have thought of a dozen reasons I might have advanced to support my theory that Doug, in a real, old-time Western, done with the care for detail that characterizes all his work and on the magnitude that his recent productions have achieved; with a sensible story, having both gripping drama and real comedy, and scenery that would give the production a sweep as broad as our plains, could give the public a picture that not only would make him another fortune and add to his reputation, but also would restore to Westerns in general the dignity that used to be theirs and should be still. Doug draws the smartest audiences wherever pictures are shown. Can't you imagine the thrill a Piccadilly audience would get out of a Western presented as he would present it? And, anyway, what is there left for Doug to do? He has done about everything in set building that the human mind can conceive. Now he should use the sets that nature built.

Tom Meighan Sinks Just a Little Deeper

NE of The Spectator's rules of conduct is to be fair. In my review of The Popular Sin in the last issue I said that apparently the Paramount Long Island studio had no new ideas in lighting. I wish to make a retraction. It has. In The Canadian, Tommy Meighan's latest, there is an extraordinary exhibition of lighting. Most of the scenes are laid in two rooms in a farm house. The rooms are devoid of any lamps or lighting fixtures, yet at night are lighted brilliantly. The hidden system throws a brilliant light on Tom's face, no matter which way he is facing, and also shines refulgently on the top of his head, at the same time throwing his full length shadow on the wall. The sun does even better than that during the day sequences. Simultaneously it throws two shadows of Tom, each on a different wall. I take off my hat to the studio. It has done something in the lighting line that even God can't do. There are some snappy close-ups in The Canadian. There is one of Tom smoking his pipe, followed by one of a girl washing dishes, followed by one of Tom smoking his pipe, followed by one of a girl washing dishes, followed by one of Tom smoking his pipe, followed by one of a girl washing dishes, followed by one of Tom finishing his smoke, followed by one of the girl finishing the dishes. They are terribly exciting. You can see the smoke rising from Tom's pipe and the girl's hands moving in the dishpan. In one of them Tom appears to be thinking. The girl has a tough

year on a farm, but not tough enough to affect her highheeled slippers, silk stockings or marcel. A firm of London lawyers, which signs its name after "Yours very truly," an expression never used by a firm of London lawyers, sends her a check for five hundred pounds to the distant Canadian farm. The check is not "crossed", as is the habit in England, and, anyway, is something that lawyers in London would not be idiots enough to send to Canada, when drawn on a London bank, for no one in Canada would cash it. The London Daily Mail subscribed for The Spectator the other day and forwarded a check drawn on J. P. Morgan & Co., New York. lawyers in the picture would have sent exchange. But the girl starts off for the railway station with no cash, with nothing but the check with which to buy her ticket. I think I have seen a more hopelessly impossible picture than The Canadian, but not during the last fifteen years.

THEN he was introducing George Young at Grau-

Heart Interest in Catalina Contest

man's Egyptian on the occasion of the presentation of the \$25,000 check to the channel swim winner, Fred Niblo referred to the young Canadian's mother and everyone applauded, including the man sitting directly in front of me. Three years ago he was a big man in one studio and now is a big man in another. It was just about three years ago that I submitted to him a story based on the love that existed between a mother in poor circumstances and her eighteen-year-old son. He was good enough to read it himself and afterwards he told me at length just why it would not do at all. The love that exists between a mother and her boy was not screen material, he said. It was something in which an audience could not be made interested. He proved everything he said—and the other night he applauded when Fred Niblo referred to the love that existed between seventeen-yearold George Young and his mother. All the world is applauding the same thing. It is the mother that makes the Young story dramatic. Do you imagine that if Norman Ross, the famous athlete, had won the race the thrill of it would have circled the globe? By no means. It would have been only a sporting event. But because this unknown youngster impressed the world with the sincerity of his love for his mother, and because the newspapers carried stories about the mother worrying about the possibility of her boy catching cold, George Young becomes the hero of the outstanding story of the century. This bears out what I said in a previous Spectator, that the public wants some real, old fashioned sentiment and that picture producers would be wise if they made some effort to cater to that want. But they will not. As a whole, the industry is incapable of learning anything. The reason for the amazing interest in the victor of the channel swim can be discovered only by a process of reasoning beyond the mental capacity of the industry to perform. The executive who sat in front of me applauded, but if you tried to sell him a story based on the sentiment he applauded he would pull gross figures on you to prove that by no possibility could a picture made from such a story prove to be a box office winner. It's sex stuff that the public wants, my boy, with a leaning towards war stories and spectacles. As for a mother's love for a kid, a boy who has no sex appeal—it would be a flop.

When Mr. John Doe Produces Pictures

ERHAPS this year will bring forth the Sensible Producer. There is such an opening for him that it is an economic certainty that he will appear sometime, for where there is money to be made someone ultimately turns up and makes it. Let us suppose that John Doe is the individual who becomes the Sensible Producer and makes all the millions that can be made by producing sensibly. Mr. Doe must have a bank roll to start him in business, just as he would have to have if he wanted to start in any other business. He should have \$400,000 to assure the finishing of four \$100,000 pictures during the first year. Of course, he should get the negative cost back on the first picture before he finishes the second, but he is playing safer if he can make at least four pictures without depending upon the revenue from the first, as he thereby would be more independent in making his releasing arrangements. His organization to start with will be composed of himself, the best production man he can find, and a girl to tell people that the other two are in conference. The first addition will be a story editor who will dig up a story that he can sell to Doe and the production man. No difficulty will be experienced in finding stories, as the best ones now being written are being rejected by the big producers, who do not understand what a good story is. The story selected will be put into perfect shape for shooting, no matter how long it takes. A director who can shoot that kind of picture will be selected. He will be given an opportunity to make suggestions regarding the story, but after his suggestions are considered and acted upon, and the changes, if any, incorporated in the script, he will shoot the story exactly as it is written. The cast will be selected with full regard for acting and none for big names. John Doe's productions will have real actors in them, instead of famous people. The story will be held to be supreme. Shooting will proceed smoothly and the morning an actor's name appears on the pay roll that actor goes to work, and he will work until he is through and paid off. Meanwhile the story department will have the second story in hand in order that shooting it may begin soon enough after the first picture is finished to keep the mechanical force employed, for it is during his first year that John Doe must build up his organization to handle the four or five units he later will have at work. Cutting and titling will be done intelligently, and in course of time John Doe will have in a box a picture that was produced sensibly, which means that he will have a picture that will please audiences everywhere. It will have been made exactly as George Loane Tucker made The Miracle Man.

He Will Do All the Impossible Things

ND, like The Miracle Man, John Doe's first picture will have no big names connected with it. There will be nothing in it but entertainment. John will take it to New York, where ninety-nine film salesmen will turn it down because Mary and Doug and Jack Barrymore are not in the cast, but the hundredth will see that it is a motion picture, and Doe will get a release that will return him the negative cost. The picture will not make a great deal of money, for as yet "A John Doe



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Production" will mean nothing to the public. After a while along will come number two, "Another John Doe Production," which will do better than the first; and the third will do so well that exhibitors will ask about the other two. By the time the fourth is released exhibitors and the public will know that "Another John Doe Production" means something, and unless I miss my bet Mr. Doe then can take his pick of the big releases. And he will get his big release on his own terms, the most important of which will be his stipulations that he will make his pictures absolutely to suit himself and that they are to be featured as John Doe Productions, not as starring vehicles for any artists. The public wants new faces and will get used to looking for them in the Doe pictures. John Doe's name in electric lights will mean human stories, honest productions, fine acting and sympathetic direction. It will not take the public long to discover this. Mr. Doe will make some actors famous, as Tucker did with The Miracle Man, and other producers will think they are out-smarting him by grabbing these actors on long term contracts, but John will smile and continue to pay reasonable salaries and advertise the fact that you must see his pictures if you wish to become acquainted with stars in the making. While these other producers are paying enormous salaries to hold the stars that John made, he will be making others and will be adding to the value of his greatest asset-"Another John Doe Production." He will have no directors nor actors under contract and will be independent of them. He will not pretend to give the public anything but the honest entertainment it likes and it will not take the public long to learn it. In his Western pictures he will not have six-cylinder revolvers that will fire more than six shots without reloading; in his dog pictures he will present dogs as dogs and not as actors; he will know that the public loves old men and will feature them, and he will make millions of dollars by doing all the other things that our present producers say are impossible. He will have his titles written and punctuated in a manner that will not offend intelligent people. I am not claiming credit for originality in suggesting this method of making pictures. Everything I suggest was done by George Loane Tucker when he made The Miracle Man, the greatest money-maker in the history of the screen—something that was made possible because, when he made it, Tucker thought only of the picture and not of money.

Pictures Will Last Long Time

JOHN DOE'S pictures will retain their drawing power for a long time, for they will deal with fundamental human emotions which do not change. He will not insert shots of someone doing the "Black Bottom" for he will know that within a few months a picture containing such scenes will be old fashioned. He will not present any of the temporary flights of fancy in which the public happens at the time to be indulging. His first picture will be as up-to-date when the tenth is issued, as it was when released, consequently the popularity of his later pictures will bring into renewed circulation the first he made, evening up the earnings of each of them. John Doe will be a hard-headed business man with sense enough to know that he knows nothing about making pictures, but with an ability to build up an organization of people who do. And

he will leave such people alone. He will have the pick of the picture brains of Hollywood, for there is not a single brainy person connected with the screen who is happy in his present position. There is not one capable person on the pay roll of a Hollywood studio who is giving his employers the best there is in him, because half his creative energy is wasted in doing battle with the conditions that surround him. The Sensible Producer will come as a Godsend to the suppressed brains of the picture world. He will offer to authors and directors the first opportunities they have had to work for a man who will listen to them. Never in the history of any industry was the stage so set for the entry of a newcomer who can build a tremendous success on the failures of those who have preceded him. The present method of conducting the business is such as would appall a man with any knowledge of business efficiency. But to date the industry has accomplished one good thing. It has given an opportunity to a large number of people to gain a grasp of picture essentials even though it has refused to let these people express themselves. It is among these people that John Doe will recruit his organization, and there will not be another producer in the business whose pictures will have half the audience appeal that the pictures made by him will possess. There is nothing problematic about the advent of John Doe. The opportunity that is presented to him is too glittering to be overlooked.

Poor Material to Inspire a Staff

TNQUESTIONABLY one of the greatest of the many ills from which the motion picture industry suffers is self-complacency. If it were less satisfied with itself the public might be more satisfied with it. There comes to me in the mail "Greater Paramount Pictures;" an ably edited and attractively printed house organ which Monte Katterjohn turns out for Famous. It lists seventeen pictures as composing the 1926 honor roll. I do not understand the system of scoring, as Beau Geste, perhaps the finest picture Paramount ever produced, is not on the list. Ten of the seventeen were made out here. Behind the Front and We're in the Navy Now head the list in that order. Both are inexpressibly silly comedies, totally lacking in cleverness. The Grand Duchess and the Waiter comes next. Mal St. Clair gave this picture very able direction. Let's Get Married is number four. The only thing I can remember about it is that I thought it very trivial. The Vanishing American—the only one of the lot I included in my list of the ten best pictures of the year.

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Mantrap-a very good picture. The Quarterback-an utterly ridiculous picture. The Campus Flirt-I have not seen it. Padlocked-very fine. The Blind Goddess-very good, notable for its cleverly handled court room scene and the acting of Louise Dresser. Dancing Mothers-I have not seen it because my friends told me it was not worth seeing. A Social Celebrity-very weak story. Forlorn River-a Western that might have been a lot better. The Palm Beach Girl-one of the worst pictures of the year as I remember it. Born to the West-just another Zane Grey. Aloma of the South Seas-full of absurdities. The Ace of Cads-I always like Menjou, but there were glaring inconsistencies in this picture. This completes the list that Paramount holds up to its organization as inspiration for this year's output. Would it not have profited the organization more if the house organ had pointed out the weaknesses in all these pictures as things to be avoided in 1927? How are its pictures to be improved if complete satisfaction is expressed officially with all the poor pictures on the list? When Paramount heads its list with Behind the Front it is telling its organization that it approves its lack of cleverness. When it honors The Quarterback it is telling its writers that no story can be too silly to gain its approval. Instead of giving three cheers for these pictures because they made money, it would get farther if it took them apart to discover why they did not make more.

There is a reporter in It. You can tell he is a reporter, for he sports a big note book. In newspaper circles that would be no guide to identification, for reporters do not carry note books, big or little. The screen would not characterize a blacksmith always by having him carry a bass fiddle. Why the note book? Merely because it is a screen stupidity that has become standardized. Reporters make notes, on their cuffs, backs of envelopes, or any old place, but never when talking to anyone and never when they need their eyes to see what is going on around them, as was the situation with the reporter in It. If Clarence Badger had wanted to give us a really, truly reporter he would have shown him sauntering out of the scene in which he got his eyefull, and then would have given us a medium shot showing him standing alone somewhere making notes on the edge of a newspaper.

June Mathis, in discussing original story drawbacks, says, "The necessity of needing a story for a screen production by a certain date crowds producers for time, and the screenwright must rush his work, must put aside his best to give only mediocre results from his hurriedly prepared story." If it will help M.-G.-M. any, I might remind it that a year from now it will need stories to go into production for Norma Shearer, Greta Garbo, Jack Gilbert, Lon Chaney, Ramon Novarro and its other stars. That ought to give it plenty of time to get ready.

George Marion, Jr. wrote the titles for It. Of course they are of the wisecracking variety. That being exactly the kind of titles that suit the picture Marion's work is excellent and contributes greatly to the entertainment value of the producion. One title says that Moreno's father has "gone to Herrin, Illinois, for the shooting." That is a clever and witty title—wisecracking, of course, but exactly matching the spirit of It. I have seen a great

many sets of Marion's wisecracking titles and this was the first set used where it belongs.

* * *

The next time you view a picture note how completely a medium shot presents a scene. Watch how it registers the thoughts of the characters. Notice how clearly you can see the expression on every face on the screen. Then ask the producer of the picture why under the sun he put in so many senseless close-ups. If the direction and editing of a picture be done intelligently there is in no finished production an excuse for more than three or four close-ups. You can measure the degree of the lack of intelligence in a producing organization by the number used in excess of that limit.

* * *

Mickey Neilan and D. W. Griffith add their voices to those of other directors who protest that the foreign picture methods that American audiences are approving were discarded by them years ago as old stuff. There is only one thing about these foreign touches that matters—that audiences enjoy them. If there be anything else this country discarded that foreigners can dig up and entertain us with, let them go at it. I can not see that it adds anything to the luster of American screen art to point out to the public that it discarded something that someone else now uses effectively.

I see by the papers, where I gather my film news instead of opening all the fat envelopes which the press agents insist upon mailing to me, that Madeline Brandeis is making a two-reel comedy with a cast composed of children of prominent screen players. That's a million-dollar idea. A series of such pictures, provided the stories are good, should prove immensely popular.

Purely from a publisher's standpoint, it is of considerable interest to us that among an unusually large number of subscriptions to The Spectator arriving in one mail there was one from the London Daily Mail and one from the London Evening Standard, two of the most

* * *

powerful publications in England.

Sid Grauman says in an interview that "we may expect war pictures to keep the public favor so long as their treatment is new, the plot fresh and the proper perspective is used in the picturization." Sid, astute showman that he is, utters a great truth. As long as pictures about war live up to his specifications they will be popular. So will pictures about anything else.

LANCASTER & GARDNER

ARTISTS' REPRESENTATIVES

3

523 TAFT BUILDING HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

WE ARE ADMONISHED

Dear Welford Beaton:

I read The Spectator from cover to cover. But I am getting annoyed with you. If you are not very careful, you are going to degenerate into a nagger and a harper. It isn't nice for clever gentlemen to nag or harp or carp. Not often. You are, for instance, so pleased with yourself about discovering titles and their punctuation crimes, that you drag them into every paragraph. You are right about them, but persistent self-righteousness isn't nice. It is a good subject to touch upon in teasing vein about, say, twice a year.
I worship bright male minds—but

they mustn't nag.

Yours co-preachily, ALMA WHITAKER.

Dear Alma Whitaker:

How could you? Because you are a writer I charged you no more for a year's subscription to The Spectator than I do actors—and you chide me! You have a boy. Being a regular boy, let us assume that he refuses to wash behind his ears. In an effort to mend his ways would you "touch upon it in a teasing vein about, say, twice a year"? You would not! You'd nag the poor little devil until he reformed. Or, if you wouldn't you should, if I am right in my surmise that you think washing behind the ears is a practice that has its good points. If you think you can reform the motion picture business by teasing it every six months, go ahead and try it with your own hefty, logical and brilliant typewriter, but leave me alone to follow my nagging policy. I know I'm not getting anywhere, but I'm having a whole lot of fun.

Yours starchily, WELFORD BEATON.

"WHAT PRICE" AGAIN

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Your opinions are always stimulating, right or wrong. Of course, to me, they are right when I agree;

wrong, when I disagree.

In the Spectator of December 25, you reply to a correspondent who objected to your review of What Price Glory? with entertaining sarcasm. I have read that and also your review with interest. You have, however, failed to point out a few weaknesses in the picture which I would like to call to your attention.

I saw the picture with a United States Army major. He had not seen the play, but thought the picture decidedly pacifist propaganda, and that it portrayed far from typical military life and characters. To me the picture was a succession of clever screen touches, but it missed the great moments that made the play.

In the dug-out scene the play showed Captain Flagg caring for his men with iron strength and the ten-derness of a mother. That hard-boiled

captain's compassion for his boys, mangled, dying, crazed by useless WAR, tore the hearts out of the audience—left them sobbing with an unforgetable resentment toward war. I believe this scene made the play the success it was. It touched the hearts of the public with poignant grief-as the story of the anguish and compassion of the Christ always has touched them. I believe this made the play a success, in spite of the vulgar scenes, and not because of them. The picture expresses but a faint echo of the power of this scene on the stage, hence the vulgarity, which you so rightly condemn, is about all there

Perhaps it was impossible to express the power of the scene in question in the picture medium, but I am sure some of it was lost through spacing and mechanics. For instance, Flagg had just pulled his men through a string of tragedies, quieted and comforted them, though wounded and suffering, into rest-when the hysterical lieutenant bursts in like a bombshell, shattering the captain's hard-bought morale with his tirade, including the line What Price Glory? etc. Now a most vital thing here is the effect of the tirade upon Flagg and the others—the awful reaction of it upon those other broken menbut, in the picture, we see only closeups of the lieutenant as he shouts his lines, with cuts to his titles, and back each time to the close-up until he

All criticism aside, surely you will agree that in a time of "rumors of wars" a picture of war that, what-ever its sins of commission, has at least a few virtues of omission in that it does no flag-waving and stimulates no desires for military glory, may do less harm than the patriotic variety after all.

ALWAYS AN INTERESTED READER.

COLOR IN PICTURES

Dear Mr. Beaton:

In your article, "Most Valuable Pictures of the Year", you say you would have placed The Black Pirate on your list if Douglas Fairbanks had made it a more fearless experiment in applying color to a feature picture; and that he did it in tones at a time when color photography was advanced far enough to warrant the use of a greater diversity of colors.

After viewing previous pictures that had color, I had always been of the opinion the director had said. "Now, boys, we have an expensive color camera here today, costing so and so. So bring on your colored stuff, and let's get our money's worth." And judging from the results, the prop, men must have over-exerted themselves.

Just previous to the appearance of The Black Pirate, I saw a printed statement to the effect that Fairbanks

had it in mind to show how color could be repressed and made more effective by using in one scene only those colors that harmonized; and, going even further, to have only a suggestion of color-in other words, to use shades and tones instead of bold. blazing colors.

Now, in previous pictures no one could keep from exclaiming at the colors. For example, in The Toll of the Sea one exclaimed at Anna May Wong's marvelous wedding costume—for it was breath-taking in its livid and living colors—but I saw the picture twice and was so entranced with the colors (in particular, the bold reds) that I almost completely lost track of the action and could return to picking up the story thread only with a jolt.

But color in The Black Pirate was quite the opposite. Never did the color intrude on the story. Never once was the action detracted from by the color. Rather was it built up, and supported. And when real color was needed, as for example the blood on the dagger used to regain the ring from the man who had swallowed it, it was a bit of a jolt, here quite permissible, and legitimate in building

up the action.

Thank God, with a crew of pirates before the camera almost the entire time, Fairbanks did not attempt (as so easily he could have) something of a mixture between the New Orleans Mardi-Gras, the sample cards sent out by house painters, and the futuristic painting recently sold, which, after being displayed for a couple of days, was found to be the artist's palette, wrapped up by the mistake of his clumsy assistant.
GAYLORD A. WOOD.

WOODEN MOBS

My Dear Welford Beaton:

Your review of The Scarlet Letter gave me great satisfaction inasmuch as I have been waiting to read what you would write about it I have not seen the picture, but I was one of the mob for one day, and you may be interested to know the psychology of the "wooden effect" you mention.

Many of the extras had been on the picture for days, so they knew Seastrom's obsession. . . I was paid a larger check than the usual person and told to bring my tears with me, so naturally I expected to emote.

It was the scene where the minister tears open his shirt to expose the brand on his chest; I was directly below the platform on which he stood. . . The acting of Hansen, although he spoke in Swedish, was realistic even if I had not understood Swedish, which, however, I did. . . . I did not act; I was carried away by the sheer force of drama, my jaw dropped, my eyes gazed fascinated at the exposed brand which acknowledged a common guilt with Hester.

Seastrom saw me, though I had made no move except what my face expressed. He shouted at me, "You expressed. He shouted at me, "You must not express anything." I stared at him. "You would not do it," he continued. I was amazed. I talked back (unpardonable sin), I said, "Pardon me, but I would." He whispered to an assistant, and I was placed in the far background, where I could not offend by being human. Every move was like an automaton.

I saw one man called down, because he raised his hat a second too soon. They were all to come off at the same time at a given signal. In point of fact no human beings of any nation on earth would have acted as they were made to act by the Swedish director, Mr. Seastrom.

Among other strange inconsistencies in the picture, which has not been mentioned in the different critiques I have read, is the fact that all the other children were long dresses of a rough, coarse material, but Hester Prynne's child was dressed in beautiful blue velvet with short skirts. . . . Hester herself, instead of wearing the same kind of bonnet as was worn by all the other women, which were made to cover all their hair, wore one that set for back on her head, showing nearly all her hair.

And have you seen those wonderful pictorial stands? With the hand pointing at Hester, where we see instead of a woman who has suffered, there is the picture of a high school girl waiting to be spanked? The way Lillian Gish was dressed

gave her a brazen attitude towards the people of the village, and lacking in good taste and simplicity, which would have won sympathy. . . . These glaring faults amaze and mystify, and if the so-called "Great Ones" fail to sense them, what hope have we for

ONE OF THE WOODEN MOB.

A CORRESPONDENT WRITES To the Editor:

I have just finished reading the copy of The Film Spectator that came this morning and, as usual, I have enjoyed it immensely. But I want to take exception to a statement by Alfred Hust-

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wick in an article dealing with the art of motion pictures. He says, "The motion picture, as a medium of expression, has apparently reached the limit of its growth"; and then, "The art of making motion pictures is not going forward". Now, I am not a movie critic, but I believe that pictures are better today than they used to be. If they aren't, why do the picture companies keep building bigger and finer theatres? And why do we get such wonderful pictures as The Big Parade and Variety and Bardelys the Magnificent all in a few months?

Another thing I want Mr. Hustwick

to answer is this. Why does he refer to the art of the motion picture as if it were something that could be separated from the whole picture business? Does he mean that writing photoplays and acting and directing and photographing, all put together, make a distinct and separate art? Or does he mean that there is something about the business that puts it in the same class as writing operas or painting or any other art that can be analyzed and discussed as an

H. R. M.

Whittier, Calif.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By DONALD BEATON -- The Spectator's 16-Year-Old Critic

CCORDING to a magazine I happened to pick up the other day, Tommy Meighan is supposed to be up among the big moneymakers of the screen. However, if he continues to make pictures like The Canadian, the end of his box office value is only a question of a few more pictures. Meighan is one of the best looking men on the screen, and he has plenty of punch, too.

The best looking man in the world

can't get away with a whole picture full of close-ups of himself. And when Meighan tries it, he falls flat, because a lot of popularity rests on his vigorous, he-man action in his pictures. He had better start getting back into that kind of pictures, or he

will lose his drawing power.

If he doesn't change, he ought to make a success in the bed-time storytelling business, because pictures like The Canadian would put anybody to

"BARBED WIRE"

Much to the surprise of a lot of people, probably, a new angle of the war has been given to the screen. So many war stories have been shown up to date that there scarcely seems room for another one, but Barbed Wire is such a departure from the others that it will be welcome. In most of the pictures so far, the Ger-mans were made to look like fiends, except in What Price Glory? where

CHARLES L. LEWIN Life Insurance

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they were subordinated in fiendishness by the American troops.

This was a story of a German prisoner and a French girl, with Pola Negri doing fine work as the girl. Clive Brook performed as splendidly

as usual as the prisoner.

There were two things which

lifted the picture from the ranks of just good pictures and landed it among the best. Those two things were the sequence where the girl testified against a Frenchman to save her lover from unjust punishment. When she had done it, the whole French village scorned her and only the German prisoners applauded her for her brave act. The scene where she hurried along the road with the Germans cheering her and her friends reviling her was one of the best of the picture. The next great scene, the greatest in the picture, was the scene where the blind returned soldier spoke to the crowd, and asked them to stop hating, as the dead begged them to.

"THE MIDNIGHT SUN"

There was a lot of money spent on The Midnight Sun, apparently, but it

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would have been a much better picture if whoever made it had gone to the trouble to make the details correct. The picture should have been good because it had a good staff working on it, with Walter Anthony doing the titles. The titles, by the way, were not worthy of him at all. Pat O'Malley made a good grand duke, and Laura La Plante was as sweet and pretty as usual. George Seigman made a very good heavy, which is a habit with him. Raymond Keane gave a rather colorless performance, but maybe he would have been better if he had been given time to get his breath, as he seemed to be perpetually breathless. He might be good, if he would only get rid of the ardent look which he carried all through the picture.

The lack of respect shown a grand duke who could sentence a man to death for slapping his face was re-markable. There was no kow-towing

to him at all, except by a few. Keane hit the duke, but he only slapped him. He would have been shot just the same if he had hauled off and knocked him cold. Anyway, no man is going to only slap another whom he hates. The clothes of the women were modern, notwithstanding that the time was about thirteen years ago. At another time, Miss La Plante and the hero were supposed to have been walking in the moonlight. They might just as well have made it sunlight, for there was practically no difference between the sunlit and the moonlit scenes. The grand duke ordered the fastest destroyer in the service to chase the heavy's yacht. Perhaps it didn't occur to him that the fastest destroyer may have

MALCOLM STUART BOYLAN

Supervising Editor Gitle Department

FOX

been in the South Seas. After they got off the destroyer, they rushed frantically along typical California streets. Pictures like this aren't going to boost Universal any.

DENNY SLIPS

Universal has rather unique ideas on publicity. They advertise The Cheerful Fraud as a second Skinner's Dress Suit or This Happened to Jones. That's a rather strange thing to do, because Take It From Me was a much better picture than either of those other two. If they had to use comparisons, to say that The Cheerful Fraud was as good as Take It From Me would have been much better. Not that The Cheerful Fraud was as good as Take It From Me, but it would have been just as truthful as saying it was like Skinner's Dress Suit or This Happened to Jones. Maybe I didn't enjoy this picture as much as I would have if it hadn't been run through hurriedly as the end of a New Year's Eve matinee.

Unlike Take It From Me there was a constant straining for laughs in The Cheerful Fraud. The whole picture was somewhat forced, and had little of the breezy humor that characterizes the Denny-Seiter comedies. One thing I will say for them both, and that is that they are still keep-ing away from making all their pictures the same. However, they had better be careful that they don't spoil the general tone of their comedies in their attempts at variety. There was a bad lapse into silliness in this picture during the sequence where Denny and the heavy were fighting in a speeding automobile. The car apparently steered itself, which was silly and bordered on slap-stick. The next Denny picture should be an improvement on this.

"WHAT PRICE GLORY?"

All the big pictures lately, except Beau Geste, have been disappointments to me. What Price Glory? is just the same as the rest. After the seventy-eighth time Edmund Lowe and Victor Maclaglen staged their little swearing contest, it began to get monotonous. I'm probably too dumb to see it, but I don't see where anyone gets the idea that What Price Glory? is a great picture. Just because it is filthy, and is twelve reels long is no proof that it is a great picture.

I read Dad's criticism of it before I went to see it, so maybe I am influenced by his views. As a rule, he and I don't discuss pictures until I have written my reviews, but he saw this picture before I did, and got his criticism in before I could, so I couldn't help but get his view first. He said that he had no sympathy for any of the principals, but I liked Captain Flagg more than I did the rest of the cast, although that's not saying much, because the rest were duds when it came to establishing

sympathy.

How Victor Maclaglen as Captain Flagg ever got away with all his drunkenness and rough-housing is a mystery. No one ever seemed to think it strange that a top-sergeant would stand up and curse a commissioned officer until he was blue in the face. Soldiers would stand around the door and listen to them swear, and seem to find nothing out of the ordinary in the performance.

Towards the last of the picture they all had some kind of axle-grease on their faces, but it was hard to determine what it was supposed to represent. It couldn't have been meant for mud, because all the time the troops were fighting they raised clouds of dust. Never during the fighting sequences did they get into

From now on I think I will confine myself to smaller pictures. They are more dependable.

The Examiner says that there is a scramble among producers to sign up directors will they interested themselves more in people who understand stories and how they should be screened, producers would find that it was an easy matter to get directors. There is nothing mysterious about directing. Anyone with some knowledge of the fundamentals of picture making and with sense enough to permit him to grasp an author's conception of a scene, can put such scene on the screen adequately. The director situation is serious only because producers do not allow literary people to have contact with productions. They expect directors to supply the literary touch and there are not half a dozen in the business who have the necessary mental equipment for it.

Fascinating Youth features the Charleston. This makes the picture old fashioned already. In making pictures it is unwise to incorporate fancies upon which the public is expending more enthusiasm than it can maintain. Such pictures can last only as long as the enthusiasm.

A real need in Hollywood is the establishment of an institution to teach screen artists how to walk. Hedda Hopper is about the only woman who knows how to do it, and James Young is about the only director who knows how it should be done.

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Edited by WELFORD BEATON

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EDWARD LEVEQUE

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LETTERS

READERS

FROM

IN THIS NUMBER

REMEMBER

APPLESAUCE

NIGHT OF LOVE

SUBWAY SADIE

MIDNIGHT KISS

SNARL OF HATE

FOOTLOOSE WIDOWS

EVERYBODY'S ACTING

SUMMER BACHELORS

BLONDE OR BRUNETTE

THE COUNTRY BEYOND

NEW YORK

KID BROTHER

OLD IRONSIDES

GOING CROOKED

THE OWL WITCH

EONARD LE VERUE FLAMING FRONTIER

SOME YOUTHFUL CRITICISMS

THE FILM SPECTATOR

EVERY OTHER SATURDAY

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HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., FEBRUARY, 19, 1927

"Old Ironsides" Is Quite Stupid

RITICIZE that!" said Bernie Fineman to me exultantly as we were filing out of Grauman's Egyptian after the premier of Old Ironsides. Thanks-I will. It is the most stupid big picture ever produced. It takes a glorious page out of the history of the United States and by stupid writing, directing and editing makes a sorry mess of it. Paramount is to be commended for its endeavor. It saw in the episode of the U.S. S. Constitution a theme for a great motion picture. It spent money lavishly to get such a picture, and the only reaction that the audience receives from the result is due entirely to the waving of the flag and not at all to any drama that is put on the screen. Old Ironsides is a deplorable example of screen craftsmanship. All its dramatic virtues are in the first few hundred feet. The scene in Congress Hall, Philadelphia, is handled splendidly. Ben Hendricks, by fine acting, makes a distinct appeal to our patriotic emotions, and Rupert Hughes, by some excellently written titles, puts over the message of the picture. But except for some amusing comedy, well done by Wally Beery and George Bancroft, the picture ends there. There are some isolated bits that stand out to relieve the gloom surrounding them, but which lose all their vigor through lack of contact with one another. Perhaps there are five reels of good stuff in Old Ironsides -not more. About that much footage is devoted to what the picture is about, the dramatic and colorful exploit of the Constitution in ridding American shipping of the menace of pirates, something out of which a wonderful motion picture could have been made if intelligence had been applied to its making. Always I enumerate the items in my indictment of any picture. That much is due the people who made it, and without the items the whole serves no purpose. But even the importance of Old Ironsides as a picture would not justify the use of as much space as it would require to set down all its faults. I can touch on only a few. Surely the script contained a better story than the one that reached the screen. It looks to me like one of those twenty-reel literary efforts which they shoot and then put a blindfolded person on

the floor of the cutting-room and gum together the pieces he picks up. They keep on turning out pictures in that way, although a really good picture never will be the product of such a system. Lawrence Stallings, Harry Carr and Walter Woods are credited on the screen with the literary end of Old Ironsides and they ought to be ashamed of themselves if among them can be distributed the blame for the raggedness of the attempt to tell a story. After the good start it gets, it falls into the clutches of a mechanical mind which decrees that you can carry a picture just so far without a love element. In the first half of Old Ironsides is possibly the most unreal love story ever shown on the screen, a string of utterly absurd scenes, deadly dull in themselves, ridiculously extravagant in their emotions and unrelated to the theme of the story. James Cruze is about as tender in his love scenes as a shunting engine is among box cars. While I do not think that any director could have made a good picture out of the material provided for Old Ironsides, I am confident that there are several who could have made a better job of it than Jimmy did.

Chances for Drama Are Muddled Badly

THE big battle at the end of Old Ironsides is a striking example of poor directing or worse editing. As it does not seem reasonable that one man could make a picture so faulty without assistance, we will have to

HOW CAN WE KNOW?

As nightly I go down the street
I scan each lurid poster sheet
To find some play whose theme will merge
With my own temperamental urge;
That is to say, when strong desire
Needs fuel to feed its smold'ring fire,
I yearn to see emotions shown
In some accordance with my own.

If sentimental be my thought, Why then, it seems, the picture ought To be replete with good intent And love—the flower of sentiment.

If in a sad, depressing mood,
Where Melancholia and her brood
Of horrid imps disturb my sleep,
Oh then, oh then! I fain would weep
In sympathy with troubles shown—
Of course—more poignant than my own.

If in a joyous frame of mind, I like to see a frothy kind, With Song and Laughter, Jest and Quip In gay carousal, lip to lip.

But woe is me! Alack-a-day!
I never see for what I pay!
How can I know when on the street
That applesauce is served for meat:
That comedy is ofttimes sad,
The morals of a picture bad,
And that which fills my soul with joy—
One suited to my mood? Oh, boy!

-THE PROOFREADER.

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attribute the faults in this one to the composite mind of its makers. This mind is responsible for a most unimaginative naval battle that should have been crammed with thrills. It should have had one supreme moment, one culminating point that would bring an audience to its feet. Paramount had a glorious page in American history and two million dollars to produce such thrill, but failed. By neglecting to make the story stick definitely to one line of thought, and by treating what story there was in a manner that robbed it of all reality, it left the mind of the audience without a focal point in the battle upon which to fasten its attention. There was nothing dramatic about the beginning of the battle, about its progress or its end. It is edited wretchedly. As it opens we are shown the exchange of broadsides between the ships and the shore battery, and about the time we might have become interested in it, there is a switch to American and enemy ships, and we are left to wonder if the shore gun crews had gone off shift. Lord Nelson characterized the blowing up of the Philadelphia as "the most bold and daring act of the age." As this picture shows it, Johnnie Walker paddles over with a gang of comrades, does the blowing up and paddles back. There is not a thrill in it. There is much cutting during the battle to irrelevant things. On the false theory that the interest of the audience has been centered in Charlie Farrell, there are cuts to acquaint us with what he is doing, thus attempting to make his fate of more importance than the outcome of the battle. And there are other cuts to comedy scenes that divert the attention of the audience from the theme of the story, exhibitions of remarkably poor screen craftsmanship. Esther Ralston is made such an unreal character that at no time is it possible for one to become concerned in her fate, so it is just as well that there are no cuts to her during the battle. The escape of the four Americans from the enemy camp might have become tense if it had been allowed to. But again slapstick methods are resorted to and an utterly absurd love scene introduced. With the lives of four men hanging by a thread, three apparently remain suspended in the air while the fourth passionately kisses a girl and makes tender speeches to her, further registering the love between them, although at least one reel previously had been wasted in planting it, without the audience caring a hoot whether they loved or hated one another, for the theory upon which the picture was based was that the audience would be interested only in the historical significance of it. We are shown Farrell's reactions to scenes in the ship's hospital, reactions that had as much to do with the story as the outcome of the next world's series has. Despite the fact that the reviews

TAY GARNETT
Writer

DE MILLE STUDIO

Demmy Lamson, Manager Ruth Collier and W. O. Christian, Associates in the daily papers re-echoed the statements in the advertising pages that Old Ironsides is a great picture, I do not share Sid Grauman's opinion that it will run a year at his house. I think its life there will be short. Outside of the splendid performances of Wally Beery and George Bancroft and the sympathetic and meritorious prologue that Sid has given it, it has nothing to recommend it. There is not as much advanced screen thought in its whole length as there is in one reel of Clarence Brown's Flesh and the Devil. It would have made me much happier to have found Old Ironsides something that I could have praised, for I always am pulling for every picture to make good.

How Not to Film a Super Spectacle

THE motion picture mind does not approach these "epic" pictures in a way to produce good results. To spend two million dollars and get nothing better than Old Ironsides is an economic and artistic crime. I do not know how the picture was made. What you read in The Spectator is prompted by what I see on the screen, not by studio gossip. One can argue with more abandon when he has no facts to go on. My guess about the latest Cruze opus is that at no time did anyone connected with it deem it necessary to have more than a mere thread of a story. Spectacle was counted on to put the picture over. That is good reasoning when the spectacle in itself has enterteinment value. I believe it is not going to matter greatly whether Cecil de Mille has much of a story in The King of Kings. The picture will have majesty, overwhelming beauty, and deals with a subject that allows latitude in treatment, for while its locale is fixed, and its main incidents matters of historical record, there is nothing to prevent a producer giving us his own conception of settings, costume and general atmosphere, for we have no standard by which to judge them. In such a beautiful production as Faust the story is not of supreme importance. Whatever it may lack in literary value is compensated for in the grandeur of Erich Pommer's conception of its setting. The chief appeal of such pictures is to our aesthetic sense. But when we start to make an Old Ironsides, Rough Riders or Wings we can not rely on aesthetic appeal. We are dealing with grim realities. The value of the story is the sum total of the value of the production, for the magnitude of the scenes is but part of the story. In building up The King of Kings De-Mille can sacrifice the narrative to some superb scenic effect; in developing a physical picture like Old Ironsides the moment you sacrifice the narrative you harm the whole production. In the case of the former you may start with the items of your spectacle and fashion a frail story to knit them together; in the case of the latter you must have a stirring, consistent and dramatic story, and plan your spectacle with the single thought for its value as story material. No doubt Paramount handled Old Ironsides as De Mille is handling The King of Kings. The spectacle was considered to be the chief thing and so much of it was shot that when cutting time came the production value was fixed in the studio mind as being of supreme importance and in the attempt to crowd all of it in the finished film there was no room for whatever story value the script contained. If Paramount had centered its attention on the story and prepared a perPage Four

fect one of suitable length, then planned its spectacle solely as part of the story, it could have saved a million dollars in production cost and given us a picture that would gross a couple of million dollars more than Old Ironsides will earn. If Stephen Decatur had been made the central figure in a story that settled down to the business of making us interested in him, we might have had a picture half as good as Bernie Fineman thinks Old Ironsides is, and that is twice as good as a picture need be to make a pile of money.

"Night of Love" a Good Picture

THE Night of Love is the latest picture in which Samuel Goldwyn presents Vilma Banky and Ronald Colman to their admiring millions. George Fitzmaurice directed and makes of it one of the most artistic offerings the screen has shown since the same combination gave us The Dark Angel, a really notable picture. Miss Banky and Colman are called upon to do their best work in some highly dramatic scenes and some tender love scenes, and at all times meet the demands in a manner that will enhance the hold they have on those who patronize pictures. Scenically the production is a triumph. It is an early seventeenth century story, with both ducal and gypsy atmosphere, permitting elaborate costuming, antique and picturesque interiors and striking exterior shots. Fitzmaurice is at his best with such atmosphere and presents a series of exquisite pictures. Pictorially The Night of Love stands comparison with the finest costume pictures that I have seen. Sam Goldwyn, our most consistent producer of good pictures, may congratulate himself upon having given the screen another most worthy film. The secret of Goldwyn's success is that he releases a picture when it is completed, instead of completing it to meet a release date. He starts production only when he has made his story as perfect as possible, and takes all the time that is necessary in shooting, cutting and titling it. No other system will produce works of screen art. But perfection in a system does not compensate for imperfections in the story, and no picture can be great without a great story. The Night of Love is weak in theme when compared with such a picture as Flesh and the Devil. The former is a story of a lust for revenge; the latter tells the story of a great friendship. Fitzmaurice does not relate his narrative with the swift succession of dramatic incidents that Clarence Brown uses with such telling effect in his picture. The Night of Love drags. The story is interrupted to permit comedy shots that to me are not at all funny, and even if they were, they do nothing to advance the narrative, which is reason enough for their exclusion. They contribute largely to the excess footage from which the picture suffers. Several scenes are too long drawn out. One is in a gypsy camp, its purpose being to plant the dawn of love between Vilma and Colman. There are cuts from them to an entertainment staged by the gypsies. Far too much footage is devoted to a dance that in itself is not at all entertaining. The interest of the viewer is in the principal characters and the only permissible cut from them is to something still more interesting. In this instance the cuts are to a particularly uninteresting dance and its reaction on people who are of no importance to the story and who in no way are involved in the love scene. Perhaps one purpose of the scene was to show Vilma the attractiveness of gypsy life to give impetus to her growing resolve to remain in the camp with Colman, the gypsy leader. If so, it fails of its purpose, for the particular phase of the life which it presents is too dull to attract a young woman. Colman enters a cell in which Miss Banky is a prisoner and although the duke's retainers are hot on his heels he tarries to make love before conveying her to a place of safety. It is a hoary movie habit which takes almost all the drama out of scenes which should be dramatic. Such scenes should be presented in a manner that would point up the danger the characters are running. When the man pauses to caress the girl it means either that there is no danger or that he is taking too great a chance with the girl's safety. If Colman had rushed into the cell, grabbed Vilma and rushed out, the scene would have retained all its drama. As presented it is liable to cause irritation.

Summing Up the Debits and Credits

THE Night of Love is a good picture. I repeat that to keep you from getting the impression that the faults I enumerate spoil it as a whole. They do not. I do not believe that any picture in which Vilma Banky and Ronald Colman appear could be devoid of entertainment value. When I become specific in pointing out a minor fault in a film it is in the hope that, if I be right, a similar fault will be avoided in the future production of some reader. You should see The Night of Love. Don't let anything I have said, or will say, give you any other impression. There is another fault similar to that committed in the gypsy camp scene. Vilma is being returned to her husband, the duke, by Colman. A riotous feast is in progress in the great hall of the castle, a Bacchanalian revelry in which almost naked girls disport themselves. At the time the audience, I think, will be interested mainly in the meeting of the husband and wife. Alone in the projection-room I could scent drama, but I had to view several cuts from the dancing girls to Vilma and Colman, had even to read titles in the dancing sequence, before the meeting occurred. Suspense, perhaps you will contend. I term it irritation. There always is more suspense in swiftly moving action than in scenes that are extended by shots that are extraneous to them. Nothing extraneous can contribute to the suspense of a scene. When two characters are coming together in a meeting that is fraught with drama, take as long as you will to bring them together, but keep them moving towards one another and do not allow anything not pertaining to the scene to break in on it. That is the way you get suspense. There is still another scene in The Night of Love presented in a manner that robs it of the suspense that rightly should have characterized it. There is a price on Colman's head and the duke's retainers are anxious to earn it. He brings Vilma to the castle, a daring thing to do. But if you entered the theatre at the beginning of the sequence you would have to sit through the entire picture before you would discover that there is anything daring in it. There is not a soldier in sight, not a sentry on duty. Vilma and Colman stand in the center of the court in the bright moonlight. Neither registers that there is any need for precaution, that he is running any risk of losing his life. How can you expect

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an audience to see danger in a scene handled in a manner that indicates that the director did not think it was dangerous? If the two characters had sought safety by darting from one dark recess to another; if sentries had passed within a few feet of them; if they had embraced in the shadow of a menacing battleaxe, the sequence would have been thrilling enough to keep one on the edge of his chair. As we see it, it is unreal, tame and makes no appeal to the imagination. But the proportion of my space that I have devoted to the demerits of the picture is out of all proportion to the footage they occupy in the production. The story is based on a rather daring premise, an old Romany law that permitted a duke to enjoy the first night of love of a bride of a retainer, but it is handled adroitly by Lenore Coffee and directed with good taste by Fitzmaurice. You can take the children. The duke is played by Montague Love and I don't think I ever have seen him give a finer performance. Natalie Kingston is quite a captivating little heavy woman. One thing I noticed about her was that when she was pleased by the discomfiture of her rival there was real humor in her smile. It was not the hard, sneering smile of the standard model villainess. John George, as a jester, gives a very worthy performance. Photography is credited to George Burns and Thomas Brannigan, who deserve great praise for their contribution to the production. The titles by Edwin Justin Mayer are written all right, but punctuated in a manner that takes most of the vigor out of them. When are these people going to learn that it is only by correct punctuation that the full strength of a title can be brought out?

George Melford Has a Good One

EORGE MELFORD has made a gripping and highly Jentertaining crook drama out of Going Crooked. A few years ago Melford was giving the screen some of the best pictures it was getting, but of late I nave not seen his name connected with important productions. I do not know if I may term Going Crooked a "come back" for him, but certainly it reveals that he has not lost his vigor, his sense of drama or his eye for composition. He has given us one of the best pictures that have come from the Fox studio for a long time. He keeps the story moving briskly, handles his big scenes with sureness and without heroics, and shows himself an adept at portraying drama according to the prevailing method of repression. No scene is overdone and none is carried one foot beyond the length necessary to the telling of its share of the story. The only weakness of the picture is in the editing. Close-ups are used with inexcusable prodigality and the force of many scenes is lessened by them. Those who edit productions do not seem to realize that screen art consists of telling stories through the medium of pictures, not of portraits. There seems to be a mechanical rule calling for the use of close-ups whenever they can be inserted, regardless of their dramatic significance. Used correctly they would be inserted only when it is impossible to register the point in a medium or long shot, for every close-up robs a production of pictorial value that properly belongs to it. George Melford has one of the best casts of the season in Going Crooked. Bessie Love, that superb little artist, is the girl. Oscar Shaw, who made an impression in Up Stage, scores again

in this picture. He is one of the most sincere leading men on the screen. Gustav von Seyffertitz, a really great actor, has a prominent part and injects in it a degree of art that gives it high rating as a performance. Leslie Fenton, another conscientious actor, contributes largely to this dramatic treat. Lydia Knot plays his grief-stricken mother in a convincing manner, and we have a brief glimpse of Evelyn Selbie, a sterling character actress who, in my opinion, has no peer among the women of the screen. Edgar Kennedy plays a detective and can not be blamed for the fact that his characterization contributes the only note of unreality that the production reveals. No doubt the script called for a comedy detective and Melford and Kennedy had to make the best of it. A writer takes liberties with probability when he specifies that a typical screen boob detective be assigned to the task of solving a great jewel robbery. It is all right in a farce, but he is as much out of place in a gripping drama as a pink elephant would be. But if you can stand the epidemic of close-ups and swallow the detective, you will find Going Crooked one of the most entertaining crook dramas that have come along in a long time. The fact that Melford had a good story and a capable cast to work with does not lessen the credit due him for molding his materials into a really worth while picture. The story was adapted for the screen by Keene Thompson from a play of the same name by Aaron Hoffman and William Collier Sr. It was titled by William Counselman, who was extraordinarily careless about the punctuation of the titles. The lighting and photography strike a high note. They play a considerable part in the effective telling of the story. Charles Clarke did the camera work.

Menjou's Latest Is a Poor Thing

TY 7HEN a picture opens with a close-up of a butler asking his employer if he is going to dine at home, followed by a close-up of the employer saying that he is not, followed by a close-up of the butler asking his employer if he is going to the theatre, followed by a close-up of the employer saying that he is not, you may know that you are in for a particularly unimaginative motion picture. And that is what Blonde or Brunette is. The stupid abuse of close-ups matches the general stupidity of the whole treatment of the production. The story is a frothy thing that someone with a Lubitsch touch might have made mildly amusing. It is something not suitable to Richard Rosson's style of directing, a practical, downright method which is all right for turning out little program pictures, but which does not reveal the niceties that belong to sophisticated French comedies. The editing robbed the picture of whatever chance the director gave it. All the scenes are mounted well and the characters are attired smartly, which would have permitted the film to have had considerable pictorial value, but such quality, as well as the story itself, were sacrificed in the cutting to the ridiculous obsession for close-ups. Attractive backgrounds and groupings that mean something are obliterated to allow for close-ups that mean nothing. If anyone connected with pictures can justify a close-up of a butler asking his boss where he's going to eat, I wish he would forward his argument to me. I am sure all of us would like to read it. To be thoroughly inconsistent even in its faults, Blonde or Brunette gives Menjou one

title in a long shot. If such be permissible once in a picture, why not oftener? The literary weaknesses of the production are as glaring as its technical weaknesses. Adolphe Menjou is the hero and to be amusing to the audience the story must make it sympathize with his tribulations. Such a story can be interesting only in the degree that the audience is interested in the principal character. But Menjou is characterized as a hopeless ass who deserves all the unhappiness that comes his way. Not at one spot in the picture is he shown as having as much character as a goldfish. In the opening sequence he is revealed as a poor sap who allows some drunken friends to overrun his house. We have hopes for him when he begins to register indignation. We expect to see him chuck out the offenders, but all he does is to leave himself, after giving spirited utterance to a rather silly title. A man who leaves his home to escape objectionable acquaintances who infest it is not much of a man, but such a one is the hero of this story. Later we see him sitting in misery while his wife plays the harp and sings to him, and then devoid of enough spirit to oppose his wife's wishes when he desires to draw the curtains to permit enough daylight to enter the room to permit him to read. We have such men in real life, but we classify them as poor fish, not as heroes, and we don't give a damn what happens to them. John McDermott adapted Blonde or Brunette from something or other, which may or may not have had some merit to start with. Certainly the adaptation has none. I do not know if the title of the picture should have a question mark after it. The fact that it has none on the screen means nothing, for Paramount is careless with them. But I think Blonde or Brunette? would have been slightly more intriguing. And it would have been a little bit of meaning in this otherwise meaningless picture.

Proving That You Never Know

EREAFTER I am going to do my own roasting of pictures and give credence to the criticisms of no one else. Everyone panned The Flaming Frontier. I read so many adverse reviews, and so many of my picture-wise friends told me that it was no good, that I avoided it in favor of pictures that the chances were I would praise. I like to say nice things about what I see on the screen. But one night The Flaming Frontier came to one of my favorite neighborhood theatres—the one where the blonde cashier reads Schopenhauer and smiles while making change - and being the only new picture showing that night within my rambling limits, and having the option of seeing it or helping my younger daughter with her algebra, a study of which I am so ignorant that I marvel at anyone who knows what it is about, I chose the lesser of the two evils, fully aware that it would prompt me to make caustic comments on it. And I liked it. I liked every reel of it and think it a splendid picture, statements which place me at issue with all the reviewers in the country who have brains. True, I think that Hoot Gibson's wig might have been a bit nattier, that it is unlikely that automobiles were parked at the side of the West Point parade grounds in 1872, and that Ward Crane looks funny with a sweeping moustache and a goatee, but there were things of so much more importance in The Flaming Frontier that only a captious critic would peck

at such details. There were several flaws in the production that I would criticize if I found them in screen offerings that are nothing but motion pictures. In the last Spectator I pointed out many faults in a recent Hoot Gibson picture, which was merely a Western made for the sole purpose of entertaining. The Flaming Frontier is more than a Western, more than a motion picture. It is a bit of American history, a colorful and tragic bit that Ed Sedgewick presents with a wealth of color and an appreciation of the tragedy that makes it rise above the ordinary screen narrative that one can condemn when it takes liberties with screen technic. What is a fitless wig compared with the desperate and hopeless last stand of Why worry about anachronistic automobiles when thousands of Indians are preparing an ambush for American soldiers? Why cavil at Hoot's lovemaking when he rides so magnificently and heroically in a pathetic and fruitless attempt to succor his doomed comrades? Leave your meticulous motion picture mind at home when you view The Flaming Frontier and you will see a great epic of the time when the West was young, when brave men were carving the United States on the unscarred plains over which Civilization had to trek to reach the ocean where it began. Universal deserves praise both for making this picture and for making it so well. It has an extraordinary sweep, and performs the miracle of making the audience sympathize with both sides in the warfare between the Indians and the soldiers. In this respect the picture is eminently fair, consequently being a valuable historical document that should be preserved at Washington for future generations of America to consult.

Gibson's Riding and Other Things

THERE are some features of The Flaming Frontier more important than Hoot's wig, that might be discussed with profit to the makers of pictures. Walter Anthony gives a series of stirring titles to point up the drama of the gathering of the Indians. The purpose of the titles is to show us how widespread is the uprising, the names of a score of different tribes being given. But each title is followed by a scene showing Indians coming down a hill, and apparently the same hill was used in every shot. Sedgewick overlooked some good drama and opportunities for superb photography, by not showing the oncoming Indians in different locales. One tribe was enough to bring down the hill. Another could have been shown fording a stream, another filing through a rocky pass, another following a precipice around a mountain, another as a crawling mark in the immensity of a level plain. Such shots would have added to the pictorial wealth of the production and made more dramatic the rebellion of the Indians. In the West Point sequence a scene shows Gibson being a victim of a silence sentence. He was dismissed from the academy, he was to speak to no one and no one would speak to him. When he is leaving in disgrace he endeavors to speak to everyone he encounters, meeting with rebuffs that were designed to create sympathy for him. Did he not understand his sentence? Did he not know that he would be rebuffed? Instead of creating sympathy, such scenes served only to indicate that he had little intelligence. A dramatic scene achieves the ultimate in drama only when it is presented perfectly. No true drama can be built on

hokum. Hoot's departure from the academy would have been more impressive, and would have aroused more sympathy for him, if he had passed through groups of his former comrades, with eyes front, shoulders back, step firm, accepting his fate like the gentleman and soldier the audience knew him to be. As presented it was bad direction. But there is a tremendous amount of good direction in the picture to make up for it. I think it was in the first Spectator that I said a weakness of The Pony Express was the failure to have the riders always pressing onward, never stopping for a moment. An early sequence in The Flaming Frontier shows Gibson as a pony express rider. In every shot he is flying over the ground. When still in motion he leaps from his horse and hardly touches the ground before he is in another saddle and away in a rush. Without slackening speed he delivers a message to an orderly of General Custer and presses onward to his destination. There is drama in that ride, drama that The Pony Express sadly needed. And how Hoot Gibson can ride! You will recall that several times I have said that there should be more riding in Westerns. There are few men in the world who have the superb grace of Gibson in the saddle, but I have seen him in pictures in which he scarcely rides at all. I believe I could stand a few reels of nothing but his riding with the camera going along beside him. I do not see why they persist in making such an artist on a horse's back such a clumsy goof on the ground. A man who can ride as he does would show a little more grace on his feet. But that is not the way they characterize Hoot, and I think he ought to do something about it. Either that, or he should stay in the saddle all the time and make Pavlowa jealous.

Why Not Simply Shoot One Picture?

THERE are shots in The Flaming Frontier which indicate that it was the product of that Hollywood system by which several pictures are shot, cut up and one made out of the pieces. Hoot Gibson delivers a message to Reno. After he says something he is grabbed by two soldiers and backed against a tree. Then there is a cut to something else. The reason for the rough treatment no doubt remained on the cutting-room floor. No sane director would shoot such a scene by itself. No perfect script would contain it. You may remember that I enumerated many illogical scenes in The Third Degree. For example: Jason Robards is characterized as an aristocratic young man moving in the best society. I found fault with direction that permitted him to stride to his wife's table in a cafe without removing his hat. The other evening I dined with a person who worked on the picture. He told me that there had been a previous sequence showing a woman pressing drinks on Robards until he became intoxicated enough to do anything foolish, retaining his hat when he should have removed it being a logical manifestation of his condition. But in the completed picture there was no room for the explanatory sequence and only the scene which was inconsistent in itself was used. I was told that if The Third Degree had been released in twenty reels it would have been a wonderful picture without a single inconsistency. No doubt that is true, but why was it made that way? Von Stroheim is trying now to paw his way out from under four hundred thousand feet of film, of which perhaps ten thousand feet will reach the screen. He starts out under obligation to his employer to spend \$350,000 and spends \$1,000,000. Yet he is hailed as a really great director. I can not see it. He shoots forty pictures and is praised because he can pick a good one out of them. There are a score or more American directors who could make great pictures if they were allowed to run wild as Von Stroheim is. Almost everyone in the business will tell you that it is necessary to shoot thousands of feet of surplus film before cutting begins. A drunkard will tell you that it is necessary for him to have a few more drinks. If you be one of those who believe that ordinary efficiency has no place in the motion picture industry, toddle over to the Forum and take a look at Flesh and the Devil, a finer example of directing than Von Stroheim ever gave us. It more nearly matches my taste in screen art than anything that he has done. Clarence Brown shot that picture within time schedule and cost estimate. Von Stroheim took eight months on The Wedding March, Brown eight weeks on Flesh and the Devil, and if the former comes anywhere near being as good a picture as the latter I will take off my hat to Von. Lubitsch is another man who knows how to make a picture. He prepares a perfect script and then shoots it as written, within his cost budget and time limit. That is the only way in which a perfect picture can be made. Let us assume that Von gives us the greatest picture of all time in The Wedding March. Then I will say that it would have been still infiinitely better if it had been made sensibly. You can not make a perfect picture out of pieces of a perfect one. Perfection ceases to be when the first sequence is eliminated. Perhaps the only way in which we can make pictures in Hollywood is the way we are making them now. But when we learn how to make them we won't be making them that way. And we will know why they get rough with Hoot.

"Subway Sadie" Is Quite Heady

RST National's two Als—Rockett, supervisor, and Santell, director—introduce a new art in Subway Sadie, the art of telling a story with portraits. The production is a series of close-ups of Dorothy Mackaill, Jack Mulhall, Peggy Shaw, Gaston Glass, and a lot of other people of less importance to it. Occasionally there is a medium or long shot in order to keep us from forgetting whether the characters are in bed or walking in Central Park. There are many effective close-ups of Dorothy doing nothing, with cuts to close-ups of Jack watching her do nothing. After giving this new art due consideration I have arrived at the conclusion that I prefer the old-fashioned way of making motion pictures, the system that uses more backgrounds and less lipstick in telling stories. Of course, a screenful of face talking to itself is intriguing, but sometimes it interrupts interesting speculation. For instance, the closing sequence in Subway Sadie shows Jack Mulhall in bed. Before the close-ups start we get a glimpse of the room in which the bed is situated. Before I had concluded my study of the architecture to determine if Jack slept in a storage warehouse or a cathedral, the close-ups came on and I never saw the room again. However, this new art adds a mental stimulus to picture viewing that ordinary pictures lack and for that it is to be commended. You must keep alert

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or you will forget where you last saw the bodies of the characters. At one time Dorothy's head was talking while the camera made frequent jabs at Peggy's head to keep us from wondering if Dorothy had gone batty. The last I saw of Dorothy's body showed it encased in her nightie. I dropped my stick and my dive to retrieve it was prolonged by someone with fallen arches stepping on my hand. When I came up I thought I had lost nothing, for Dorothy's head was talking still, but I got quite a jar when Mulhall's head sprang onto the screen instead of Peggy's, and I was shocked by my supposition that he had crawled into bed with her, but was relieved later to discover that by that time the two heads were making love to one another in Central Park. The picture deals largely with Dorothy's head yearning to go to Paris. Finally her boss' head tells her head that she has been appointed Paris buyer for the firm. But before that, her head has become engaged to marry Jack's head. The Paris appointment plays havoc with the love affair of the two heads. They meet in Central Park, on the very same bench upon which Jack's head had proposed to Dorothy's head, and Dorothy's head tells Jack's head that the engagement is off, for she is going with her head to Paris. Her head bids his head a very tragic farewell and passes out of the scene. Why her head did not tell his head that the wedding would have to be postponed until she returned with her head from Paris I do not know. Normal people would have handled the situation that way. The scene was designed to be impressive and very sad, but it was based on such a ridiculous premise that it was absurd. First National seems to be making a specialty of presenting us with pictures that are an insult to even childish minds. It is hard to imagine how any producer can expect an audience to accept seriously as a big scene one showing a girl pathetically breaking off an engagement, while reiterating her protestations of love, because she is going to Paris on a business trip. I'm going to San Francisco next week. I suppose I'll have to divorce Mrs. Spectator and bid the children a tearful, last farewell.

Here Is One Girl Who Knows How

HE ability to act naturally in front of the camera is somewhat rare among those who appear on the screen. Practically everyone you see in a picture conveys the impression that he is acting. No film that I have seen in a long time is freer from obvious histrionics than Summer Bachelors, which Allan Dwan directed for There are a lot of people in it and they move through the story with a degree of naturalness that you seldom see, a tribute to the splendid direction that Dwan gave them. But there is one girl, Lelia Hyams, whom I never saw before, who conducts herself as if she were totally unconscious that there was a camera within a mile of her. Not in one foot of film does she convey the impression that she is acting, although the part that she plays is that of an actress. As I watched her the thought came to me that if we had more like her, people who can walk through parts as naturally as they walk through parks, we would have better pictures because they would come to us exactly as authors write them. The trouble now is that as actors insist upon acting, authors must draw the parts with allowance for that fact. As long as Miss Hyams conducts herself as she does in Summer

Bachelors no author need worry about a part he writes for her. Apparently she does not have to act. She IS the part. She is a fine looking girl and it is a safe prediction that soon her name will be well known if she be fortunate enough to keep clear of directors who will insist upon her adopting the standard methods of expressing emotions. Madge Bellamy is almost equally natural in this picture. It is only a little while ago that she was acting all over the place. Something seems to have happened to her. She has lost all her old mannerisms and has subdued her eyes until we can see her other features. She is flawless in Summer Bachelors except in one scene and for the weakness in that I blame the direction. While under hypnotic influence she marries Allan Forrest, of course remembering nothing about it afterwards. When she learns of it she is surprised but slightly. Even allowing for all the vagaries of the present young generation, it appears to me that any normal girl would be astonished greatly to discover that she had become a wife without knowing anything about it. When Madge receives the startling information she is sitting on a bale of hay. It seems to me that she should be surprised at least enough to fall off. That one little scene is the only flaw in an otherwise perfectly directed picture. The story is not an inspiring one, dealing principally with girls who give parties for men whose wives are away for the summer, but it is handled delightfully and with the best of taste. An interesting feature is the inclusion of a minor love interest which ends with a sacrifice. Leila Hyams falls in love with Matt Moore, who she knows is married, and apparently is willing to break up his home until she learns that his wife is an invalid who could not stand the shock. The acting highlight of the production is the scene in which she bids farewell to Matt. It is done beautifully, and with a minimum of obvious acting Miss Hyams puts great feeling into it. As the long cast is presented in a list at the beginning of the film it is impossible for a reviewer to remember all the names. If the names appeared as the characters were introduced, as they should be, I could give credit by name to several people in Summer Bachelors who deserve it. I remember that Frances Agnew wrote the titles. She made a good job of them and punctuated them in a manner that does not detract from the general air of intelligent handling that the picture reflects. An elaborate production, splendid photography and beautiful gowns add their contributions to the general excellence of this thoroughly satisfying production. The Fox organization deserves credit.

Mickey Neilan Does Quite Well

UITE in line with The Spectator's contention in a recent issue that the public is ready for something human on the screen comes Mickey Neilan's Everybody's Acting. Barney Glazer, who has been doing notable screen writing of late, provides a fine shooting script from Mickey's own story, and Mickey puts it on the screen with the delightful, whimsical touch of which he is a master. It's an old story that has been done a hundred times—the girl who is brought up by a bunch of delightful fathers, their solicitude for her welfare being the whole thing. There are five bachelors this time, H. B. Walthall, Ed Martindel, Ford Sterling, Stuart Holmes and Raymond Hitchcock. They prove another point that I

have touched on-given a good cast and a sympathetic idea, and it matters little about the story. Just to see these splendid actors together in a scene and to realize that the scene has a beautiful thought back of it, is to derive enjoyment from whatever they do. Add to them Louise Dresser, as a hard-hearted business woman, Betty Bronson as the young thing whom it is about, Lawrence Gray as the young man who loves Betty; fold in an adequate production and stir briskly with Neilan's direction and you have a dainty dish which should appeal to any reasonable palate. It so happens that it is the screen fare that I, as an individual apart from the editor of The Spectator, get the greatest kick out of. Neilan strikes a human note in all his pictures that I like. I can not at the moment think of any other director with a sense of humor to match his. I am sure he gets a lot of fun out of everything he does. To make Betty an orphan in Everybody's Acting he murders her mother and hangs her father. I'll bet he grinned when he wrote such scenes. Neilan's indifference to screen conventions makes his pictures refreshing. He is not afraid to point his camera at a man's back, nor is he adverse to telling parts of his story in medium shots and even at times in long shots. We have few efficient directors. The great majority work according to formula. To them close-ups must follow medium shots. It makes no difference if the scene goes over perfectly in the medium shot; there simply have to be close-ups. Everybody does it, and that is the only excuse that can be offered for ninety-nine out of every hundred of them. When one man bounces a sledgehammer off the head of another, the scene can be planted with full force in a long shot. We see the blow struck, and that is the only important feature of the scene. But the automatic director does not rest there content. He moves up for a close-up of the man who delivered the blow. He shows us that the murderer has a murderous expression on his face as he swings the hammer, thus confirming our opinion that possibly such was the case, for we hardly could have expected him to be smiling cheerfully as he knocked his friend's brains out. But that is not what makes the close-up unnecessary. It is the fact that we are not interested in the man's expression. The blow is the important thing in the scene to us, and we have seen it in the long shot. But the average director can not follow such reasoning. He makes us look at a close-up solely because it is a screen habit. Mickey Neilan is not a creature of habits. He is content when he puts a scene over, no matter how it is accomplished. He should confine himself to such delightful simplicities as Everybody's Acting. There is nothing else that the screen needs as much as it needs homely sentiment that is not permitted to become maudlin.

"The Snarl of Hate" Good Dog Picture

AM Bischoff invited me to witness a preview of The Snarl of Hate. I didn't go. I knew I would roast it if I saw it and I try to avoid pictures that I feel I will have to roast. I have many warm friends in the industry, but none warm enough to prompt me to record a poor picture as a good one. And, anyway, I knew that a picture with such a terrible title would be something awful. In addition to that, the hero is a police dog and although I am quite batty about dogs in general I have

no use whatever for that breed. But Sam grabbed me one day and thrust me and The Snarl of Hate into a projection room and I could not escape. He told me he didn't give a damn what I thought about his picture, but he wanted to know. Well, it's a pretty good film. In fact, it's the best police dog picture that I ever saw. It appeals to me because the hero, Silverstreak, can't act. Sam thinks he can, but he can't. You can see that every motion he makes is in response to direction, and he is not as sure of himself as is Rin-Tin-Tin, a real actor whom I never go to see because to me a dog is a dog and an actor is John Barrymore or someone else who subscribes to The Spectator. And it is because Silverstreak is a real dog that I like his picture. He looks as if he thought he is making an ass of himself when he tries to act, and that gets my sympathy, for I know how I'd feel if I had to stand in front of a camera and chew Doug Fairbanks' arm without really biting it. In The Snarl of Hate Johnnie Walker owns Silverstreak because he is a dog and not because he can read Horace in the original, work the combination of a safe or get rid of razor blades, three things which I am incapable of doing. He keeps him in his apartment in the city. Johnnie does not rely on Silverstreak to assist in the hunt for the man who murdered his (Johnnie's) brother. The dog works independently. I put the same idea in a dog story I wrote for Harry Rapf three years ago. I kept my dog in the city and made him act like a dog and not like Noah Beery. Harry thought the story was punk, which showed that he knows nothing about dogs and not a devil of a lot more about that kind of story. Anyway, along comes Sam Bischoff and out of the same idea makes the best dog picture I ever saw. Of course Johnnie Walker contributes something. Come to think of it, he contributes quite a lot. Somehow or other Johnnie always impresses me as a perfect type of the vibrant, young American, and in this picture he does some really good work. He has a dual role, playing two brothers, and gives a fine performance of each. Noel Smith directs. I don't know how long he has been in the business or what else he has done, but he gives this picture clever direction. He makes everything as plausible as the script would allow, shows a good grasp of composition and grouping, and tells his story without any heroics. In fact, the direction impressed me considerably. The Snarl of Hate is all right, but I still maintain that the real dog picture is going to be the one that shows a regular mutt with photographic personality, in a story that is based on the love between him and his master. The continued neglect of a field that would yield rich returns to the producer who exploited it with dog pictures that would appeal to all dog lovers always has been a puzzle. Why only dogs of the most unpopular breed are used in stories that do not allow them to act like dogs is quite beyond me.

"New York" and Some Woolen Socks

HEN I dropped in on New York Michael Cassidy was on trial for murdering someone. I discovered that Mike was played by that dear lad from the Emerald Isle, Ricard O'Cortez, which gave me quite a start, but not one big enough to spoil the trial scene for me. It was handled capably by Luther Reed, who directed. Mickey Neilan previously used the same method of show-

ing the succession of witnesses by dissolves, a method quite good enough to copy. While I was worried about what would happen to Mike, Bill Powell gave some information which cleared him, and he took into his arms a young woman whom I did not recognize as Lois Wilson until I saw what was at another theatre and coming to the Metropolitan, a news reel, a stage show, Crazy Cat, a Pathecolor of a cat, George Young swimming and the front end of New York. Also at that time I discovered that there was no reason whatever why Cortez, a perfect Latin type, should have been made an Irishman. It made the picture get off to a bad start with me. In the opening sequence Estelle Taylor, who, by the way, does splendid work in as much of the picture as I saw, registers jealousy in a slap-bang way to get the story under way. She loves Cortez, consequently should be pleased to hear Lois Wilson praise his music; but she flies off the handle without any reason other than movie requirements. Item number two against the picture. Then it began to dawn on me what an opportunity for notable photography Paramount East Coast studio overlooked. An effort was made to show the noisy soul of New York and it was about as exciting as looking at picture post cards. There was an opportunity for some of the striking camera work that characterizes some of the foreign pictures which we have seen, screen technic which Americans disdain to the point of refusing to display it when they should. New York would have been an infinitely better picture if some imagination had been used in depicting the spirit of the city. It needed the master-mind of Erich Pommer to supervise it. He would have made it a notable production. Item number three. Next the punctuation of the titles got on my nerves. A series of questions without question marks and sentences beginning without capital letters, running concurrently with the other weaknesses, were too much for me. I deemed I had done my full duty to the readers of The Spectator by going all the way down town to see the picture, so I oozed myself out past two stout persons and went over to Mullen & Bluett's and purchased some fine woolen socks to keep my ankles warm when I wear my dinner clothes, having discovered that however well silk socks set off my ankles, they do not keep them warm at night after I have worn golf stockings all day. And so to home in a bus which nearly asphyxiated me, an hour in my Ionaco, and then a dinner, principally of finnan haddie, of which I am passing fond, three rubbers of bridge, some writing, many pipes, a dip into

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Durant's Story of Philosophy, which Douglas Fairbanks insisted I should read, and to bed. I do not know why Estelle Taylor was murdered, and have only Bill Powell's word as to how it happened, and Bill was such a perfect villain that I think he lied about it. But I don't care. What I saw of the picture made me indifferent to the fate of everyone in it. Bill could have murdered all the characters without having made me forget the woolen socks.

"Kid Brother" Is a Lloyd Hit

TAROLD Lloyd demonstrates how to do it. I found fault with We're in the Navy Now and Tin Hats on the ground that they were not clever, as comedies should be, and because they were just strings of unrelated gags that had no appeal to a person of intelligence. I maintained that the real comedy must have a connected story and that the gags must be parts of it. And Harold proves it. I rate Kid Brother as a perfect comedy. In the first sequence a story starts and it is not lost sight of until the final fadeout. True, it is a frail story, which is a matter of no importance, for Kid Brother is a situation comedy and the story need be strong enough only to hold together the gags, and this story is quite strong enough for that. And what there is of it is human and clean. Harold, Mary and Doug have been bigger money-makers for a longer period than any other stars and none of them ever appeared in a picture that was not one hundred per cent clean. That should teach the industry something. When you mix a story, cleanliness and brains, a good comedy is the inevitable result. Kid Brother is amazingly clever. The screen gives credit to quite a crowd of people for the story and continuity, and Harold is to be congratulated upon having such a brilliant bunch around him. There are a score of bits in the picture that are the inspirations of geniuses. How any man could think of such an extraordinarily clever thing as putting the big shoes on the monkey quite bewilders me. And I make a deep obeisance to the man who thought of having Harold drive under the branch of the tree to knock the villain unconscious. And those are but two of dozens of bits that were responsible for making my two daughters ashamed of me as I sat between them and howled with glee. Everyone of the bits advanced the story. Therein lies the strength of Kid Brother. Each simply was a scene that advanced the tale the story told. That it happened to be funny was incidental. There is a long time between Lloyd's releases, which can mean only that it takes a long time to make such a picture as Kid Brother. No doubt Paramount, in defending We're in the Navy Now, would argue that it can not take so much time, that releasing obligations must be met. When I pay my money to see a Paramount comedy, I am looking for entertainment. The element of time, releasing dates or studio exigencies do not concern me. I don't care if it took three weeks or three years to make what I am looking at. I wish to see a clever comedy and there can be no excuse for a lack of cleverness. What can't be done well should not be done at all. Quite apart from Kid Brother's strength as a story and a laugh provoker is its merit as a motion picture. Ted Wilde directs it in a manner that is worthy of thoughtful consideration. I often have pointed out the folly of using close-ups when medium shots, or even long shots, could advance the story better. In this

picture there is abundant evidence of the strength of the contention. Titles are given to characters in long shots and there is no confusion as to who is speaking. Jobyna Ralston in one scene is just a dot in the far background as she puts over her point. In other shots there are several people in the foreground as Harold works effectively in the background. There is a reason for every close-up that is inserted. The grouping is natural. When the camera can not penetrate a crowd to show what is going on in the middle of it, it is raised and looks down on the scene. In my opinion, Kid Brother is the best thing that Harold Lloyd ever has done. It is a rattling good comedy and a perfect motion picture.

Close-Ups Spoil a Good Picture

DE Fried took his camera up to the mountains of British Columbia and with its lens gathered snowy peaks and valleys and lakes to be spread on the screens of the world. And such pictures! They are in The Country Beyond, a Fox production starring Olive Borden, and are the most glorious scenics ever used to help tell a story. They have a rich, velvety tone that adds a dreamy beauty to the majesty of the scenery. As they flitted by me I had the thought that such shots must have great audience appeal in those portions of the country where there are no mountains. There are several shots of a lake with superb mountain scenery in the background. Olive Borden and Ralph Graves paddle their canoes on this lake. The story separates them and after a time lapse Olive, now a great theatrical star, returns to her canoe to find Ralph. He again is paddling on the beautiful lake with the marvelous background. When he sees her coming he is not sure who it is. She knows him and paddles steadily towards him. Finally he recognizes her, waves his paddle and they approach one another rapidly. The audience by this time, of course, is anxious to see the lovers reunited, so the scene has a sentimental as well as a pictorial appeal. If you have not seen the picture you can imagine how exquisitely beautiful such scenes could be-a long shot just close enough to distinguish the boy from the girl, the changing position of the canoes, the boy paddling away, then turning, the waving of the paddles, and the spurt to draw the two canoes together, all the time in the background the sweep of the wonderful scenery which surrounds the lake. But that is not how Irving Cummings shoots it. Oh, no. It's a motion picture, and as Irving is a member in good standing of the directors' club he has to abide by its prescribed rules for presenting scenes. The background is blotted out, the background that Fox sent a company to Canada to get. The majestically romantic setting for a lovers' reunion is wiped from the screen and in its place we have close-ups of Olive and Ralph, notwithstanding the fact that previously we had had far too many of them. There is no establishing shot, nothing to show us the relation of the canoes to each other. We don't know if the characters are one hundred yards apart or eight miles, despite the fact that their relation to one another is the only thing in which the audience is interested. We know they love one another and we wish to see them united, and we are quite willing to look at more of the glorious background. But we have to gaze on one close-up after another, silly, expression-



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less things that tell us nothing. It possibly is the greatest abuse of close-ups that I have seen. The picture itself is quite entertaining and rich in production value. Nor is there any particular lack of merit in the rest of the direction. The high note of the film is the reunion of the lovers and it is ruined by the close-up curse. Evelyn Selbie does a bit in this picture that stands out. She murders her husband, and does it magnificently.

How They Write About Pictures

RANCIS X. BUSHMAN, as he relates in a letter published in this issue, raised an interesting point in a speech he made recently in New York, that the screen is suffering from a lack of intelligent, constructive criticism. In the New York Telegraph Herb Cruikshank discusses the matter at some length, the crux of his argument being that the reviewer need not be familiar with the technic of the screen, his mission being to judge by what he sees on the screen whether the picture has entertainment value sufficient to warrant his readers viewing it. "He can only know what he sees," says Mr. Cruikshank. Adding my voice to the general clamor, I would like to express it as my opinion that the trouble with most film critics is that they don't know what they see. I have read many criticisms of Flesh and the Devil. All of them are laudatory, but not one of them, in my opinion, reveals that its writer knows why the picture is great. Take our own morning paper critics. Ed Schallert was impressed principally with the passionate love story -yet we have had many other pictures with love stories equally passionate. Louella Parsons, as nearly as I can gather from her somewhat rambling review, seems to be of the opinion that Greta Garbo's acting is the chief merit of the production-yet we had many other pictures revealing better acting. Criticism that is of most value to the layman, of necessity must be of value to the creators of the object criticized, and to others engaged in the creation of similar products. A criticism that says merely that a picture is good or bad is of no value to anyone. Praise of Flesh and the Devil is of little value to one who is induced by reading it to view the picture unless it specifically mentions the reasons the picture is praised. General praise is of no value to the motion picture industry, which can profit from citicism only when critics discuss intelligently the features which, in their opinions, make a picture good or bad. A concensus of such opinions would be a valuable guide to the makers of pictures. Stressing an opinion, other than the right one, on the reason for a picture's greatness is a guide which points in the wrong direction. Of course, all any critic can record is his own opinion. Bushman contends that such opinions should be based on more understanding than film critics seem to possess. All competent critics would not draw the same conclusions, but a digest of competent criticisms would give both the public and the industry something of value. I agree with neither of my confreres on the Los Angeles morning papers on the reasons for the greatness of Flesh and the Devil, but I do not contend that I am right. I think I am, naturally. Neither the love story nor the acting of Miss Garbo makes this picture perhaps the finest example of screen art ever produced in an American studio. Clarence Brown has made it great by his direction, by his masterly command of screen technic, by his deep knowledge of human emotions and his wonderful pictorial sense. He treats the great friendship theme sympathetically. The love story and the acting are but the colors he uses to paint his masterpiece. There is nothing in the story itself to make it conspicuous among screen stories. The picture is great because the story is told greatly. And for that, Clarence Brown deserves all the credit.

When Pigs Become Midnight Kisses

HE screen is so set in its ways that it is tiresome. Anything in the way of novelty would be welcome. John Golden produced in New York a play that was presented to the public with a name that would intrigue even a blase theatre-goer-Pigs. No doubt the title contributed its share towards the success of the production. Fox bought it for screen purposes to capitalize the advertising the play got. And he applied screen methods to it. No one had produced a picture named "Horses", "Cows", "Sheep" or "Goats',, therefore it would be impossible for one called "Pigs" to make money. The intriguing title, one with real box office value because of its novelty, was discarded and the utterly meaningless one of The Midnight Kiss substituted. No doubt the Fox sales force thought the title had a passionate ring to it and that as love and kisses are standard screen fare it would be risky business to do anything novel. In the aggregate I suppose the title, The Midnight Kiss, kept millions of people away from houses showing the picture as there were no names connected with the production strong enough in themselves to attract patronage, and such a title would suggest only another picture of standard screen love stuff. Of course the advertising value which Fox bought was a total loss. To make the venture still more unprofitable a poor picture was made from the good play. It so easily could have been made an outstanding picture. Al Cohn wrote a satisfactory adaptation, no doubt relying on Irving Cummings, the director, to make the picture rich in atmosphere and characterization. Cummings did not do this. The grandmother, a hypochrondriac and a poet were overdrawn so much that they were out of place among the real people on the screen, consequently every scene in which one or more of them appeared was not entertaining and served only to retard the story. The audience was interested only in the efforts of the two young people, played delightfully by Janet Gaynor and Richard Walling, first to raise money to purchase the pigs, and then to cure them and make a profit. But we have to sit through much footage of utterly ridiculous and childish antics of a cranky grandmother, an ass of a son and a fool of a poet, not one of whom contributes one foot to what the story is about. So much footage was wasted in this way that there was not enough left to permit the story to be told properly. The screen is woefully shy of clever characterizations, but before an attempt be made to provide it the people undertaking it should have some idea what it means. No matter how clever a characterization may be of itself, there is no room in a picture for it unless it be part of the story. We do not need talking grandmothers simply because they are supposed to be funny. What we need are real characterizations by the people whose actions tell the story. In The Midnight Kiss no effort whatever was made to

characterize two fathers who were part of the story. They are simply screen fathers, but we are given extravagant characterizations of two younger men for whose presence on the screen there is no excuse whatever. Consequently The Midnight Kiss drags wearily, and what might have been a very good picture is a tiresome one. Janet and young Walling, though, are fine. Delightful stories could be written for such a clever team. But it would be no use. Lots of delightful stories are being written now, but the treatment they get when produced knocks all the delight out of them. Before I leave this picture I would like to say that Doris Lloyd is one of the most charming young mothers whom I have seen on the screen. She has a sweet and wholesome personality and is restful to the eyes.

This One Has a Lot of Blemishes

OME day an author is going to write a comedy clever enough for even a supervisor to be able to grasp its possibilities, and if the impossibilities continue to happen, it will be made into a picture that will have no comedians in it. It will be that kind of a comedy-funny because the funny things in it happen to ordinary people and not to freaks. Footloose Widows was intended to be such a comedy. Unfortunately only the intention reached the screen. It has everything except a good story and capable direction. Among the funny people on the screen you would not class Jacqueline Logan, Jason Robards, John Miljan and Douglas Gerrard, yet they take part in many scenes that would have been amusing if the whole thing had not been so silly. Darryll Zanuck apparently wrote a poor story and Roy Del Ruth made it worse by his direction. When you see a pretty girl faint in a man's arms on the porch of an hotel without attracting the attention of guests sitting near, not even a glance turning in her direction, you can not rate the direction very highly. Gerrard trips over Louise Fazenda's foot, falls gracefully to the ground and is unconscious for a long time afterwards, although he does not fall on his head or lose possession of his monocle. Such things happen in tworeelers, but scarcely belong in features that constitute the principal part of an evening's entertainment. The picture is so full of such absurdities that it is interesting only because it prompts conjectures as to how it could display such brainlessness. It has a rich setting and deals with smart people and to have had any merit should have been done cleverly. But we can thank it for giving us a Louise Fazenda in decent clothes. She shows what an excellent actress she is. Gerrard also does splendidly. For a few issues I have been soft peddaling on the punctuation of titles, but there are so many crimes committed in this Warner Brothers offering that I can not pass over them in silence. There is one title which says, "You've got the wrong idea, honey. Find a man with money. You can always love." This is how it reads, "You've got the wrong idea, honey-find a man with money, you can always love." Another says, "What do you mean? Got what?" But it says it this way, "What do you mean,got what?" These are examples of scores of exhibitions of illiteracy which the titles in Footloose Widows contain. Surely there is someone in the Warner organization with an ordinary education. I have received letters written by its stenographers which reveal that the girls had been

to school. Why punctuate properly a letter intended only for one person and send out such evidence of gross ignorance to millions of people throughout the world? Why advertise the fact that people in Hollywood with authority to pass on titles are hopelessly uneducated? Why persist in limiting the appeal of pictures to mentalities as low as those that make them? "Who the hell knows anything about punctuation?" Jack Warner once asked me. There you have the answer to all the questions. Like most of our picture people, he assumes that what he does not know, no one knows.

Can't Build Drama On Faulty Premises

-IME was when even American girls asked their parents' consent before they married. But it isn't done now. Society has progressed beyond the age of consent, and the custom is as dead as if it never had been. A scene in a screen play based on something no longer done is not a good scene. By no possibility does it ring true. In Remember, a passable little story written by Dorothy Howell for Columbia and made into a screen play by J. Grubb Alexander, one of the big scenes is one in which Earl Metcalfe asks Dorothy Phillips' consent to his marriage with her sister. He is dubious about asking her and is relieved greatly when she consents. There is good drama in the scene, for Dorothy herself loves him and thinks that Metcalfe is about to propose to her. The fact that he asks for her sister's hand is a great blow to her, and she acts the scene well. But there is no sincerity in the scene, for it is not based on a logical idea. The audience knows that no girl is going to allow her sister to choose a husband for her, and the best acting in the world can not make such a scene plausible. The moment you get away from plausibility in drama you lose drama. And the screen writer never is faced with the necessity of sacrificing plausibility to get drama. No matter what the scene, there is a way to present it plausibly. In this picture the scene would have been stronger if Dorothy Phillips had been looking from her window and had seen Metcalfe putting the ring on Lola Todd's finger. That would provide Dorothy with an opportunity to play a strong scene alone, which, in itself, is a strong way to play a scene. There was no necessity for the introduction of the faulty premise that the elder sister's consent had to be obtained. This is demonstrated amply, without needing demonstration, in a later sequence when the younger sister elopes with someone else, the older sister hearing about it only after it is over. If Lola had to get Dorothy's consent to mairy one man, how can you justify her action when she runs away with another without consent? I review elsewhere in this issue a Sam Bischoff production, a good dog picture with a dreadful title, The Snarl of Hate. In it the guardian of a red-blooded American girl tells her that he has promised her to his partner. The audience is asked to consider that good drama, to accept the premise that a guardian of a girl who is of age can promise her in marriage to anyone whom he selects. Such dramatic lapses do not occur only in our smaller pictures. You see things similar to them in the productions of the big studios. Before a director begins to build drama in a scene he should ask himself if the scene is logical in itself. As I point out in my review, the direction of The Snarl of Hate is, on the whole, creditable, but if

the director had asked himself the obvious question, "Do guardians, in this day and age, give away their wards?", he would have seen at once that there was no logic in the situation, and would have put over the point in some other way.

Comedy Should Be Correct as Drama

NE advantage a comedy like The Lunatic at Large has over such a one as We're in the Navy Now is that it has no technical responsibilities. It has no standardized or established locales or rules of conduct. The navy picture, although frankly a slap-stick farce, is under obligations to be true to naval traditions and regulations. At least I suppose it is. Farce, to have any particular point, must have some sensible background. What fun there is in the antics of Beery and Hatton is due solely to the fact that serious-minded people are the victims of them. If all those appearing in the picture were such impossible asses as the two comedians there would be nothing to laugh at. The comedians are funny in the degree that the people surrounding them are normal. On this reasoning, as much care should have been exercised in making the picture technically correct as would have been expended on the technicalities of a drama with the same locale. If the navy picture had taken itself as seriously as a farce should, it scarcely would have shown naval officers wearing dress uniforms and fore-and aft plumed hats-whatever they are called-in war times. I doubt if a large cargo of explosives would have been carried on a transport, but I know that if it had been it would have been battened down, not stacked loosely to be toppled over by the first two-foot wave the vessel encountered. And I am dead sure that no ship carried an old fashioned torch such as We're in the Navy Now features. General alarms were sounded by the ship's bell, siren or whistle and they summoned the crew to stand by to abandon ship, which meant that each man went to the post previously assigned to him and rubbed in by daily drills. In the picture they go almost as far as sounding an individual alarm for each sailor, and the crew lines up on deck, perhaps to be as far as possible from the life-boats when the torpedo strikes. Beery and Hatton lower a life-boat and row away from the densely populated ship without being seen, an utterly impossible thing for them to do. We're in the Navy Now is cleaning up a wad of money for Famous Players-Lasky, but I contend its profits would be larger if it had made a greater appeal to intelligent people by eliminating its technical absurdities and showing a strict regard for naval practices. A simpler

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system of producing farce-comedies would be to make them indefinite as to locale, which would give the technical men as much freedom of expression as the scenarists.

I saw an exquisite two-reeler the other day, The Owl Witch, produced in Technicolor by J. C. Casler and having an all-Indian cast. Every shot is a gorgeous picture, but the action moves swiftly and the story never loses its interest. Shots that would have been drab in black and white are gloriously beautiful in this little gem. When color becomes the rule, instead of the exception, on the screen the task of finding attractive locations will be simplified greatly. Any location, properly lighted, will produce a masterpiece of art. Quite apart from its wealth of coloring and its extraordinary pictorial value, The Owl Witch is a tribute to William Bertram's ability as a screen writer and director, for he wrote the story from an old Indian legend and directed it. He has a rare sense of both composition and drama and a series of such pictures as this should make him famous. The photography of Edward T. Estabrook deserves great praise. There is nothing that the screen needs as much as it needs tworeel subjects with entertainment value. The Owl Witch would be the high spot of almost any program.

An evening's delightful entertainment is provided by Applesauce at the Egan theatre. Neely Edwards has deserted the screen for the time being to play the leading part and he gives a very able performance. The only motion pictures in which I have seen him have been terrible two-reelers. In Applesauce he plays a high comedy part in a thoroughly capable manner. The play is well constructed, is human and funny, and the lines contain some sound philosophy that will appeal to those old fashioned people who like to think when they go to the theatre. Frank Egan's direction is very good, except in the instance of the characterization of a politician who has attained power and riches without learning that when he enters the residence of an acquaintance and converses with women in the living-room a man usually removes his hat. This character keeps his on, even when introduced to women, which spoils his scenes and mars an otherwise perfectly presented comedy.

The titles in Old Ironsides are punctuated in a manner that I would term perfect. It is a Paramount picture. Both the East Coast and West Coast Paramount studios never followed the same system of punctuation in any of their other productions. They use dashes where they should use periods, begin sentences with small letters and omit to use interrogation marks where they belong. I

JOHN FARROW

ADAPTATIONS AND TITLES

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CHAR

would term such a system imperfect. Paramount itself can not claim that both systems are perfect. If Rupert Hughes used the proper punctuation in the Old Ironsides titles, then all the rest of the Paramount punctuation must be improper. The reverse also is true. Look at it in any way you like and you can not escape the conclusion that Paramount confesses that it has blundered. I have been told by people in the Lasky studio here that my campaign against incorrect punctuation is ridiculous because the screen has a system of its own. If such be the case, why wasn't the system used in Old Ironsides?

In Footloose Widows Douglas Gerrard is characterized as a titled English gentleman, an aristocrat who should have punctilious regard for social conventions. He calls on two girls in the sitting-room of their suite in a fashionable hotel. He does not remove his hat when he enters the room, and keeps it on while he is conversing with the girls. Some day when a director makes an actor go through a scene like that, something is going to happen to him, and when they clear away the things the actor throws at him, they are going to find the director dead. The jury that hears the case will elect the actor honorary foreman, take him into the jury room and during the ensuing celebration everyone will get soused.

Apropos of some comments elsewhere in this issue on the subject of film criticism in newspapers, I would like to remark that by long odds the most significant, as well as the most interesting, feature of Hotel Imperial is the fact that it is the first picture made in this country under the supervision of Erich Pommer, possessor of the greatest picture mind in the world. To those engaged in making pictures that aspect of Hotel Imperial outweighed in importance all others, but The Spectator seems to be the only publication that realized it and which revieved the picture with that thought in mind. The Spectator's review appeared some weeks ago, after the picture was previewed.

In Subway Sadie Dorothy Mackaill reveals herself as a painstaking actress. Making herself look so unattractive must have been the result of prolonged and intensive consideration. Possessing features that essentially need the softening influence of the arrangement of her hair, she chooses in this picture to slick back her hair in a way that robs her of all her beauty. The beauty of a screen actress belongs to the public as much as does her art, and she has no right to tamper with either unless playing a character part that demands it. Dorothy's friends should advise her that she is making a big mistake by affecting such extremes.

Fox bought Pigs and named the picture made from it The Midnight Kiss. Towards the end of the picture a title gives the significance of the midnight kiss. The main title of a production is supposed to have box office value, to be an instrument for drawing an audience into a theatre. How can a title have box office value if the audience has to pay its way into a theatre before it can find out what the title means? And once in, what financial difference does it make whether the title is explained or not? Another of the funny things about pictures.

In Everybody's Acting Louise Dresser is characterized as an educated, dynamic woman of great power in the industrial world. There is an insert of a letter written by her. One need not be a hand-writing expert to observe that the letter was written by someone with no force of character, that by no chance could it have been written by such a woman as Miss Dresser is characterized. You see the same blunder in a great many pictures. They bear testimony to the industry's inability to think.

I ran across Ham Beall the other night for the first time since I roasted him good and plenty in The Spectator. He was sore. I had spelled his name with only one "I" and I agreed with him that that was enough to make anyone sore.

When you stop to consider that it cost as much to make Old Ironsides as it did to build the Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel, then in turn look at Old Ironsides and at the Biltmore, you do some wondering.

In Remember Dorothy Phillips and Lola Todd play sisters. Efficient casting, for they look remarkably alike.

We really should have another war. The stock shots of the last one are about worn out.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By DONALD BEATON - The Spectator's 16-Year-Old Critic

A T LAST I have seen a foreign picture I did not enjoy, and I have seen all of them except Faust and The Waltz Dream. This foreign picture which I did not enjoy was Michaef Strogoff. The main character, Michael Strogoff, played by Ivan Moskine, wasn't dashing and romantic enough to get any sympathy for himself. As far as that goes, none of the cast established sympathy for himself as he should have. The hero, Moskine, was much more acceptable after he grew a beard than he had been before when he was smooth-shaven, except for his little moustache. There was something

queer about his eyes; one apparently was more widely open than the other, giving him a slightly cock-eyed expression. That wasn't so noticeable when he grew all his facial alfalfa.

THE czar, who sent the message which Strogoff nearly lost his health delivering, didn't know what he was doing, because he should have sent a dozen messengers by as many different routes to his brother, instead of only one. That weakened the story, because the entire plot of the story wasn't very logical. The plot was in the sending of the mes-

senger by the czar, who didn't do that logically, therefore the plot was illogical. To add to that there was the love story. A picture should have either no love story or it should have a good one. The love story in Michael Strogoff was nothing, practically. The two principals were never very entusiastic about it, perhaps because they were as cold and inhuman as I have ever seen anyone on the screen. The development of the love story was too sudden to be good. Those two big weaknesses were too much for the rest of the picture to overcome.

.G.-M. very nearly set a record in the Demi-Bride, but the last part of the picture kept them from it. The record was that of the world's silliest picture. The best feature of the picture was Joe Farnham's

titles. He started off with a few witty wise-cracks, but he got down to serious work long before the rest of the picture did. His titles are remarkable for their good punctuation and general merit. The picture was divided so distinctly into two parts that it was noticeable even to the audience. The first part of the picture was as silly as it well could be without driving the audience away. The second part was more like what is to be expected from Robert Z. Leonard. It is a significant fact that there was much more laughter at the more serious part than there was at the silly, slap-stick stuff.

HERE is a saying that it never rains but it pours. Up until a few days ago I had never seen Betty Bronson on the screen, but had missed all her pictures, by some peculiar circumstance. Then I saw her in Paradise for Two one night and in Everybody's Acting the next afternoon. She has a good personality, in fact, a splendid one, but I don't be-lieve she can act. Just so long as she remains natural and doesn't try to act, she will be a success on the screen. Of her two performances, the one in Paradise for Two was the better, although Everybody's Acting was by far a better picture. Paradise for Two was really starring Richard Dix, but I was more interested in the girl. The picture rated about average, not being good or bad. The chief feature of Paradise for Two was its rather new story.

CCASIONALLY some director makes his own story and a good picture usually results. The only thing which prevents this kind of pic-ture from being a success is that sometimes the director's brain-child is so weird no one can understand it. Marshall Neilan is billed as having made Everybody's Acting from his own story. A good picture resulted. His story was the type that I myself like, perhaps that was why I enjoyed the picture so much. Maybe the story didn't appeal to dad; it probably won't appeal to a lot of people. I imagine that the story reflected the personality of Neilan himself, and his personality might be disliked by a lot of people. Anybody's personality is bound to be disliked by someone. However, the picture is a great argument in favor of shooting stories just as the author wrote them.

DOG pictures are peculiar. As a rule they have more inconsistencies than any other feature-length pictures. The whole idea of them is wrong, because there is no dog on earth that will reason as these motion picture dogs do. A dog and his actions in a picture should be subordinated to those of the human actors, because a dog can't register emotions, and emotions are what people go to see on the screen. However, The Snarl of Hate is a very fine dog picture. If it would only shed its atrocious title, it would be one of the

best ever made. Johnnie Walker, who co-starred with Silverstreak, gave fine performances in two different parts. He is one of the most human young men in pictures. He also has another distinction; he is the only man in pictures who can throw a stick for a dog in front of the camera without looking like an idiot.

HE Snarl of Hate had a lot of mistakes in it; all dog pictures, as I said before, have. The worst one was in a title, and can be changed quite easily. The heavy promises his ward to his partner. The ward, played by Mildred June, announces to her guardian and his partner that she is going out with Walker. The guardian says, "Do you think that is right when I have promised you to him?" This was said right in front of both the girl and the partner. It's not the general custom for guardians to give their wards away in marriage to their partners when the wards' inclinations run in another direction. That one poor title stuck out like a sore thumb in an otherwise good set of titles. The rest of the faults were too numerous to mention. They were all little things and didn't interfere much with the good part of the picture. There were some fine shots of the desert, which will rather alter the general concep-tion of the desert as nothing but miles and miles of sand.

NE of the reasons why dad's criticisms are so good is because he always tells WHY he likes or dislikes something. Henceforth that is to be my policy. Summer Bachelors was good. The following are the reasons. Although I do not know, Summer Bachelors looked as if it had been made with very close attention to the story of the book. The book, written by Warner Fabian, was a success, presumably. Naturally, if the picture was following the book closely enough, it would be as popular as the book. One thing I liked particularly about the picture was its lightness. There were no very serious scenes, and the rival didn't try to shoot Alan Forrest when he got the girl. Another good thing about this picture was the newcomer who was introduced, Lelia Hyams I think her name was. Madge Bellamy turned in a good performance, as did the rest of the cast.

EVERYBODY has at one time or another read some of Edgar Rice Burroughs' stories. The absurdity of his stuff is somewhat glossed over by his literary style, but when his stories get on the screen, their silliness is too apparent. F. B. O. just made one of his stories, Tarzan and the Golden Lion. The golden lion was the best part of the picture, as he was one of the best trained animals I have ever seen on the screen. He wasn't one of the old, toothless lions which are so prevalent in pictures; he had all his teeth and was certainly fierce-looking. He must have been well trained because all of the cast seemed to get away with

their health. Outside of the lion, the picture was pretty feeble, because Tarzan was a disappointment. He was bound to be, because no man on earth can do the things attributed to Tarzan. The Tarzan in this picture had to run along the ground instead of the trees.

TARZAN may have been a disappointment in the trees, but that boy sure could run on the ground. He ran everywhere, and apparently was never out of breath. The running in this picture was one of the main reasons why it was a poor picture. No one ever walked anywhere; everybody ran like Nurmi's fondest dreams. Tarzan, who was supposed to know every smell of the jungle by heart, let somebody lose the trail for him. Of course, he had to come back to get a new start. When he got home, he found his overseer knocked out by an outlaw. In spite of the fact that the overseer was just recovering from the effects of the blow, Tarzan made him go hunt somebody, while he him-self hunted someone else. As usual, they started out at a run. The fact that he might take a horse never occurred to the overseer. About half a dozen assorted faults like the ones mentioned made the picture a poor

S A RULE, I don't like crook A pictures. They have such a gloomy, dark atmosphere. How-ever, I did enjoy Going Crooked, George Melford's picture. Bessie Love was so good in it that it would be a success anyway, no matter what else was the matter with it. The title of the picture is atrocious; it sounds like the titles you see on some of the ten and fifteen year old pictures which are shown around at the various neighborhood houses occasionally. The plot of the story was as old as the hills, but it was made in a rather different way from the usual crook plays. There was the usual master mind of the big gang of crooks. Gustav von Seyffertitz gave one of his usual brilliant performances as the master-mind. There was plenty of good action in the picture, which was, on the whole, a very pleasing little piece of work.

FTER viewing The Flaming A Forest, I was a bit suspicious of James Oliver Curwood, and wasn't overly enthusiastic about going to see The Country Beyond. However, there was nothing to worry about, for The Country Beyond was a decidedly entertaining picture. There were some mistakes, of course; no picture is without those. The Country Beyond was like The Temptress in that it was what I call a well-rounded picture. There was everything in it, beautiful scenery, action, good acting, and even big sets. The last scenes were ruined by unnecessary close-ups. The picture should have ended at a long shot of the two canoes containing the man and the girl coming together. This shot was taken through some trees

VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

BEGONE, MODESTY!

(The Spectator has been the recipient of some hundreds of letters and notes containing most flattering comments on it as a publication. As we felt that they were intended only for the editor, we have not published them, although some of the greatest names in the industry were attached to some of them. But what are we going to do when we get such a letter as we publish below? Francis X. Bushman wrote it for publication and we do not like to disappoint him, which, however, is not our main reason for making it public. We are prompted by our ego to let you know what Frank thinks about us.)

My dear Mr. Beaton:

I believe you hold a unique posi-tion in our industry and in these United States. I am going to prove it.

A month ago, I was the guest at a luncheon in New York given by the A. M. P. A. The unexpected presence of Paul Myer, editor of The Theatre Magazine, caused me to change the talk that I had originally outlined. As an actor and a veteran of the screen, I felt it a happy moment

to defend my profession.

I prefaced my remarks by stating that I had enjoyed (?) the positions of producer, author, adapter, director, star, title writer and cutter, all in one. I recalled a conversation I had with the late Wm. Winter in which he stated "the office of the critic was always constructive." I was a stock leading man at the time, and his remarks were confined to the critics of the legitimate stage. He said that "unless a critic knew play construc-tion, the back stage, the limitations of the stage and the actor, and unless

and was beautiful. But the picture went on in order to show the final close-up of the two of them kissing each other. The same old stuff.

CUBWAY SADIE is the most uninteresting picture I have seen in the past six months. It was not so absolutely bad as some I have seen; it was just deadly uninteresting. It dragged on and on in a series of close-ups which meant absolutely nothing. The plot was ancient and tottering with old age. The heroine could sell clothes to anybody after all the other girls had given up hope, and the subway guard turned out to be a rich man after all. Old stuff, every bit of it. Jack Mulhall does better and better work all the time, but a good performance from him in Subway Sadie isn't enough to make it a good picture. There was abso-lutely no reason for the title, because she had nothing to do with the sub-way except that she rode in it. They might just as well have called it Taxi Tessie, as she rode in the taxi as much or more than she did in the subway.

he could point out a play's weak spots and suggest a remedy—he did not belong."

I then said every professional man had to serve an apprenticeship, that the actor began with a foundation of reading which would include the his-

torians, dramatists, poets, philosophers, and contemporary writers of fiction, to give him a background—a basis of analysis. In addition, voice

culture and acting to learn how to act. But, I said, it is almost impossible to find a critic of motion pictures who knows enough of the complex ramifications of a photoplay before it reaches the screen, to intelligently place the blame for a bad picture. I went on to explain that, in the old days, the director or the star was held responsible, but that to-day is the day of specialists, each one capable of making or ruining a picture. The least responsible agency for a picture's failure was the actor. Citing D. W. Griffith and Von Stro-

heim, who can make a cigar store Indian act, I said what then should be the result if even a mediocre director has under him actors of experience and proven ability. I more or less heatedly accused these incompetent critics of ruining the reputations of stars and seasoned players because they did not know enough to place the blame where it belonged.

I suggested they study picture-making at close range, that they would then discover that the author, the adapter, the scenarist, the director, the camera man, the title writer, the cutter, the director-general, the combined verdict of the executives, and, last and least of all, the actor, might be responsible for the picture's failure. At some length I showed them how it was possible for a good director to save a weak story, a good cutter to save a weak director and story, et cetera, et cetera, but insisted that a greater familiarity and closer study would enlighten them

regarding the office of each of these departments. Perhaps my long association with pictures has developed a keener instinct for these things, but I said I could not understand how they dared criticize a picture without this fundamental knowledge.

Had No Axe to Grind
I explained I had no axe to grind, but felt toward them as did a great man who said of his persecutors, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

These remarks were not only intended for Mr. Myer, but also that the A. M. P. A., who were purveyors of valuable advertising space, might demand of the managing editors a higher type of men and women to review the screen material, to the end that all might be benefitted by

really intelligent criticism.

Now, I have noted "In silence and at night", when reviewing the reviewers, you stand alone in throwing the searchlight of truth on what is a midnight of darkness to others. That, by the process of ratiocination, you consider the author's original intent, the adapter's understanding of same, the director's mental equipment, the camera man's understanding of dramatic coloring—if I may call it such—to the brilliant, hackneyed or ungrammatical subtitles, the sense of dramatic values or ignorance of tempo of the cutter.

Says Kind Things Kinder, more just, no man has been than you, in judging the player's performance. For example, you have stood and watched a director insist on his conception of the part, leaving nothing to and asking nothing of the actor's intelligence, until the finished product resembles nothing so much as a painting of many personalities by the use of one only model. Again, you have witnessed splendid direction, only to have the star or the producer cut the picture to allow for longer close-ups of the star, sacrificing real entertainment and story values.

I believe I have proven my point. Your close study of your subject and



keen sense of the fitness of things have, indeed, placed you in an enviable position in Hollywood—the Home of Photoplays. Perhaps that is as it should be. We boast a critic who is competent to criticize, to analyze, dissect, carve out each one's responsibility, with courage enough to place the blame. The repetition in the foregoing is intentional.

May the balmy airs of California prolong your valuable life. Selah.

FRANCIS X. BUSHMAN.

P. S.—I consider your "Remarks on Hugging Another Man's Wife" a classic. (January 22nd issue.) The Spectator is proving a real service to the industry. F. X.

SHIRT SLEEVES

Dear Mr. Beaton:

I most heartily agree with your remarks in your last issue that our picture producers make most ridiculous mistakes in presenting English social

life on the screen.

I have done my part, not entirely unsuccessfully, in preventing these mistakes, ever since I took up the work of technica! adviser when I had the good fortune to be associated with Mr. Lubitsch in that capacity during the filming of "Lady Windemere's Fan".

I was Mr. Edwin Carewe's technical adviser on the picture to which you refer, evidently High Steppers. I feel sure that you can not have followed the preceding scene which led up to that in which Lloyd Hughes "sits in his shirt sleeves and wearing a vest while he has tea with Mary Astor."

Even the most refined English gentleman, living in a cheap London lodging house, when he discovers water pouring on to his bed from the ceiling above, will not trouble to put on his coat, having already taken it off to wash his hands, before hurrying upstairs to discover the cause of the flood. He then discovers that it

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Harry F. Petersmeyer 1800 S. Grand Avenue LOS ANGELES is the carelessness of his very beautiful fellow lodger, Mary Astor, who has allowed her wash-basin to overflow. He is greeted with profuse apologies and a friendly invitation to accept a share of the frugal supper she is preparing. He does not think it necessary, being just an Oxford undergraduate trying to get along, to do anything but accept then and there, dressed as he is.

I admit that most directors would have made him change into full evening dress and wear a gardenia in his buttonhole, when having supper with the leading lady, but we wanted to make a picture of English life.

Kindest personal regards.

GERALD GROVE.

(The act of an aristocratic young Englishman having tea with a refined girl while he wears a vest and no coat is an inconsistency that can not be excused on the score of how it happened. Such a youth, carefully planted as belonging to the best social set, would have returned to his room on the floor below and donned his coat. Well bred people do the correct thing by instinct. The action of this young man was contrary to social conventions, consequently was out of place in a picture dealing with conventional society. A technical director who defends such an exhibition of lowbrowism is at fault.)

A LETTER FROM BOSTON

My dear Mr. Beaton:

The number of The Spectator with your interesting estimate of the Vitaphone and its probable value in the amusement field, had an especial interest for me, for while I do not altogether agree with you as to its present worth, I do think it will be developed, now that the problem of synchonization has been solved. The same program that you commented upon is now being given at one of the legitimate theatres in this city, and I mailed you a day or two ago the opinion of one of the leading Boston reviewers. To me its especial appeal was that most of the talking was done by the people upon the screen, rather than by the audience, a relief, as well as a novelty.

Can you advance any reason why the exhibitors make no especial effort to eliminate talking and unnecessary noises in their audiences? It

MALCOLM STUART BOYLAN

Supervising Editor
Gitle Department

FOX

B

has reached a point with me that I actually am like the man who was going out with the announced intention of getting drunk, "And, gosh, how I dread it." I make it a rule to attend what is technically known as the supper show, for the reason that the audiences are smaller, and the liability of disturbance therefore less, but even then, it is seldom that I find myself in an audience where my attention is not distracted by conversation or paper rustling.

It utterly spoils a film for me, and I know personally many people who prefer to stay away rather than be so annoyed. And the peculiar thing about it is that the exhibitors seem to be unaware of this feeling on the part of a considerable number, or if they are aware of it they are indifferent to it. They have it in their hands to make this sort of thing so unpopular and the offenders the subject of so much ridicule, that the thing could be wiped out in a year, the country over, and its influence would extend to every audience for whatever purpose assembled.

Suppose that every time you went into a picture show, you should see flashed upon the screen, somewhat after the fashion of "Topics of the Day," some little paragraph about it, or suppose some of the big exhibitors like Publix were to offer a prize of say \$1,000, for the best article on the subject, and the winning article was then shown upon their screens, how long do you think it would be before it would be made apparent to the offenders that they were unpopular and ignorant? Not long, I'll warrant you. I hope to live long enough to see it.

FRANK E. HATCH.

A LETTER FROM NEW YORK

Editor, The Spectator:

I very much enjoyed reading several copies of your paper, and am about decided to subscribe for it. But I feel that have a justifiable complaint. You see, some of us are critics,

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too. I am sure you will take this in

good spirit.

What I mean, is that I am surprised that a man of your seeming shrewdness, and psychology - sense, would so far go wrong as to publish the opinions (or claimed-to-be opinions) of your own young son in your magazine. If a boy's opinions be published at all,—and I think they may well be shown occasionally,—they should not be printed, certainly, unless they ring true as the sort of stuff the average boy—he is the one we are concerned with—would think and write. It should not be the trite remarks of a child who has been too much in movie-adult-critic atmosphere to ring true.

And above all, if a sixteen-yearold's opinions be given, the last person in the world who should appear in the magazine, is the editor's own son, thus announced. Immediately the reader feels antagonistic—"What is this that is being put over on him? This editor cooks up something to advertise his kid."—in the very nature of it, nobody would believe the thing wasn't hokum, be the editor ever so sincere. I should think you would know human psychology well enough for that. But you have, being a parent, failed to note that the brilliancy of kids in general is noted almost always only by the parents. It bores the rest of the world.

Now if your column ran the unedited opinions of six different children, boys and girls, well and good. But I have lost confidence in your sincerity by that faux pas of yours-I am only human you see. No sixteen-year-old boy ever wrote that stuff, not all of it at least, or else he is such a rubber-stamp of the old block that he isn't worth using as a typical kid. What real boy ever uses these expressions, trite, adult-movie-critic's oldest stuff:

(Too many quotations to publish.

-W. B.)

Now, Mr. Editor, that last one especially — the crack at the woman haters. Heaven deliver us from a boy as sophisticated as that remark. A real kid would never have noticed, nor remarked on that phase at all, unless he was fairly drowned in the opinions of his elders, and had never had a chance to be himself. Take my word for it, if your boy is like that, have him looked over before it is too late. That remark showed an abnormal boy not following the show, but thinking past it, back into the director's mind and actions, with a half-sneer. Rotten stuff for a boy of that age. We want their reactions to the story—not their sarcasm, adult-copied, of the actors and directors.

We like a healthy, unspoiled kid who can sit down to a meal, and boyishly swallow the whole thing with zest, from soup to nuts, and hardly know what he is eating, except to know good from bad. He would be a poor kid indeed, who would sit back, and toy with the dish, figuring out just how it was made, and what errors the cook perpetrated in the cooking. That is for us elders, alas, who have lost youthful zest. But not for kids.

Your boy is natural when he says, in a boy's funny language, -so enjoyable because it is so un-literate, as all sixteen year olds should still be-

"It is nothing that you remember

very long for its funniness.'

Unfortunately, such remarks from him have for the most part been thoroughly edited out, or else he is abnormal. If his abnormality is too much brilliancy, it is still disagreeable to anyone but his fond parents,just as if it were too much nose, for instance, instead of not quite enough. One's as pitable as the other.

Let us hear from a real kid. And don't get sore. I have been a teacher in high school English for years, I am now in scenario-assistant work in movies, I have done editing on magazines. So I am not all in the fog. The great mob would perhaps believe a normal kid wrote that stuff-but you can't fool the small percent who know children. Why not give us some real, boy's stuff? And not too often, nor too much of it at a time.

With all good intentions E. E. SORENSEN.

New York.

DONALD MAKES REPLY

Dear Dad:

Mr. E. E. Sorensen, former high school teacher of English, has gone to the trouble to write all the way from New York to tell me I am abnormal. I must say that in my abnormality I have a companion, the allwise Sorensen himself. He says he has been a high-school teacher of English, and he is abnormal because he has gone through that experience without finding out how to punctuate yet. Mr. Sorensen had better not try to come out here and teach English, because in the West you have to know

more than your pupils to teach.
For instance, he says, "I have been a teacher in high school English for years, I am now in scenario-assistant work in movies, I have done editing on magazines." If a fourteen-yearold student made a mistake like that out here, he'd get it in the neck. That is what we call a "baby blunder". The poor man absolutely forgot his semicolons, which belonged in there. Instead, he put commas. Also, Mr. Sorensen coined a new word, "un-lit-

erate". I had always imagined that there was only one word which could express what he wanted to, and that word was "illiterate". He doubts that I write my own stuff myself; I doubt that he wrote that letter himself. No former English teacher could make so many infantile mistakes.

The studio which employs Mr. Sorensen should give him more work to do, because he seems to find time to sit and write letters across the continent. He knows much about boys' minds; I will admit that. He ought to, having one himself. I think it's just jealousy on his part; he doesn't like to see another sixteen-year-old getting his stuff printed.

I'll tell him one thing: I don't like the job very much. He can have it any time he wants it. I would just love to have him come and "boyishly swallow" his food, while I sit back and pick the cook to pieces. Of course, he would have to eat that way, because, according to him, the way you eat influences the way you write. He has sealed my doom; I can never become a writer. I can't wolf down everything in sight on the table, because I have athletic aspirations, and am in training most of the time.

Mr. Sorensen is right about my not being original. Perhaps Mr. Soren-sen's father used good English and punctuation. Just to be original, Mr. Sorensen doesn't. I would rather fall in with the common herd which does, than write a letter like this one. But cheer up, Mr. Sorensen! We have schools out here which teach English to all languages, including the Scandinavian.

DONALD.

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For Tired Minds—

Less than an hour away from San Diego, on the Los Angeles side, there is a tract of land, more than five hundred and fifty acres in extent. It was owned by a man, now dead, who had an eye for beauty when he selected it and a regard for comfort when he developed it into a country estate.

There are great live oaks on it, their gnarled limbs stretched out like the arms of benediction of ancient Druids blessing the landscape that rolls beneath them. There are pepper trees that drape lacy branches above the mirror of a stream that never dries.

All Southern California's beauty is represented within the boundaries of this estate, and its horizon is formed by the dreamy hills of Mexico and our own country.

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IN THIS NUMBER

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF CINEMA ARTS

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To Teach the Art of Making Pictures

NE OF THE series of valuable articles on the art of making motion pictures which Alfred Hustwick wrote for The Spectator a few months ago, advocated the establishment of a university devoted solely to teaching all branches of picture production. In this country to-day a young man has a wide choice of a school to teach him how to roll a pill, build a bridge, try a law suit or preach a sermon. I believe there also are barber colleges which teach people how to cut hair. The picture industry is the fourth largest in the country and there is not one school which a student can attend to learn how pictures are made. That the screen has reached a stage of demanding that something be done to remedy the situation is demonstrated by the activity in picture classes by several of the important educational institutions, notably Harvard. But there is but one logical place for the art to be taught-Hollywood. Here there should be a great school, sponsored by the art itself by the presence on its board of some of our biggest screen figures. It should have as its operative head a man well versed in teaching. No one can quarrel with the foregoing premise, and it will be interesting news to Hollywood that such an institution as it needs bids fair to become a reality. The plans are revolving around Paul Gerson, a successful conductor of dramatic schools for the past couple of decades. For a year plans have been fructifying into action. The tentative name under which careful research has been conducted is the National Academy of Motion Picture and Allied Arts, to which I offer as an amendment, the suggestion that the National Academy of Cinema Arts would be less cumbersome. A building has been arranged for and the lot upon which it is to be erected chosen. This is a matter which those high in the industry can not afford to neglect. Mr. Gerson is fitted admirably to

be the pedagogic head of such an institution, but he should not be left to bear the burden of its organization alone. It should be a bigger institution than one man can build. Hollywood as a community should get behind it, for it would attract people here from all over the world. At present it in a measure is teaching those already engaged in making pictures the details of their making, but it is not recruiting untrained brains that can be made of value to the art. The predominance of poor pictures bears testimony to the fact that it is a poor teacher. The fundamentals of the art are not being taught at all. The brain power of the country that pictures so badly need is not being harnessed, and until it is we will not make much progress towards realizing that perfection in screen productions that the dignity of the art demands. The task of teaching the cinema arts is one that belongs peculiarly to Hollywood of all places in the world. The personnel of the industry hitherto has not displayed much community spirit, and here, surely, is an opportunity for it to come into being. The close contact with the industry that such an academy located in Hollywood would have, would be a tremendous factor in its success. We have the brains here and the money necessary to its establishment, and we should not let them lie dormant while other communities and other institutions embark on a project which Hollywood should lead. The Spectator believes the matter to be one of tremendous importance to Hollywood and to pictures and will open its columns gladly to those who wish to discuss it.

CAN PICTURES GIVE US THIS?

There's a poignant longing within us,
For something we can not define,
But it subtly exalts us, and bears us
On the wings of emotions sublime.

When it comes with its breathing of fragrance, Its pulse-stirring essence of life, O, then, for the nonce we are heroes, Absolved from all routine and strife.

The things which evoke this strange "something"
Are trifles—a gesture, a kiss—
But they are rooted in primal emotions,
That combine all existence with this.

They are one with the infinite feeling, That's expressed in the heart of a rose; The bond of Divinity sealing The truth that omnipotence knows.

We seek it in books and in pictures,
For art is a thought from above,
That adorns the trite and the common
With the revealing soft vestures of love.

Ah, seldom in life do we savor
The cup of extremest delight,
But its fragrance allures us forever—
Oh, to find it, e'er cometh the Night!

-THE PROOFREADER (George Magoffin)

Applying Pickle **Idea to Pictures**

orres betrays me, talogue had NLESS my poor head for figures M.-G.-M., at the last time it issued a catalogue had as many writers on the lot as Heinze has pickles. Some of the brightest literary minds of the country are at the disposal of Metro to write screen stories as fascinating as the printed ones that brought their authors fame. Authors become famous in only one way-by having personalities to which the public responds and the ability to register such personalities by the manner in which they write. Good writing alone does not bring fame. Drieser is a wretched writer, yet he is famous. Every notable writer on the Metro lot has something that the public wants. It wants his flights of fancy, his humor, the drama that is in him or his flair for romance. If this were not the case he would have no fame. Every one of the writers could express himself on the screen as readily as he does on paper. He knows what the public wants and knows that it does not matter how it gets it, whether in a picture or in a book; with the assistance of those who are versed in screen technic he can make himself as delightful on the screen as in print. And although he may know nothing about pictures he is as well equipped as anyone on the lot to judge what should be in them, for he thoroughly understands the people for whom they are made, even though he may never be able to understand the people by whom they are made. All this being the case, Metro, with its fifty-seven varieties of writers, should be able to give the world pictures of extraordinary merit, pictures sparkling with the cleverest of comedy, or brilliantly sophisticated, or throbbing with the intensity of their drama, or gripping because of the strength and color of their romance. But Metro does not give the world such pictures. Most of those that bear its trademark are quite trashy, being in themselves a refutation of any suggestion that any one of the fifty-seven varieties had anything to do with them while they were being made. The reason for this is the fact that Metro is organized as are all the other producing companies in Hollywood. On every lot men who never in their entire careers created one idea that would appeal to an audience, have the supervisory power over the works of others who have become famous because they possess the ability to create ideas that audiences like. They use this power to mold the ideas to conform to a conception of the public taste based on things that have been done in pictures previously and not on things that might be done to give the screen a more widespread appeal. Only a mind capable of creating can handle intelligently the creations of others. We see little that is new on the screen because the minds of most of the supervisors can not grasp new ideas, and their selfcomplacency will not permit them to take the word of an experienced creator of ideas that his are good. It is a sad spectacle, this one of a brilliant and accomplished author, whose works have pleased millions of readers, having to sit opposite a man neither brilliant nor accomplished and try to sell him an idea that his mind is too dull to grasp and his conceit too great to take for granted. I believe that Mr. Heinze is quite right when he standardizes all his fifty-seven varieties, but the screen is not going to get very far when we apply the pickle idea to pictures.

Too Much Value Attached to Names

COMETIMES I believe that we would have better pictures if all those of major prominence in them now would go fishing and allow the little-known people an opportunity to use their brains. The other day I sat on the side lines of a set and watched a director friend tell a young man just how to act the scene. The young man draws fifteen hundred dollars each week, the amount being based on the theory that he knows how to act. A man worth that much money should be able to walk on to a set and play a scene without direction. He should be so proficient in his profession that he would know more about it than the director. His importance to the production was such that the director had to cajole him and argue with him in an effort to have the scene done properly. The best that this director could get was a compromise between his knowledge and the actor's lack of it. I imagine that there are one thousand young fellows in Hollywood, any one of whom would have put himself unreservedly in the director's hands and given a much more intelligent interpretation of the scene than did the actor whose weekly check has stupefied him into the arguing habit. There are dozens of minor directors in the business who could make better pictures than the big ones if allowed the same latitude. The same thing is true of the writing end of the pictures. One would think that the combined efforts of Anita Loos, John Emerson, Frances Marion and C. Gardner Sullivan could produce a script that would be the last word in perfection. Four years ago when Joseph Schenck decided to star Constance Talmadge in Dulcy, Anita Loos and John Emerson adapted the play to the screen. I read their adaptation and silly is the only word that would describe it. Miss Marion and Sullivan were called in to make it sane and they prepared the shooting script. At that time I was in the Schenck publicity department, headed by Harry Brand, my work being of a quality that caused Harry to sit up nights figuring how to get rid of me without offending his boss, who foisted me on him. Harry finally pursuaded Syd Franklin, who was to direct Dulcy, that I would be something weird in the way of a script clerk and Syd took me on and I learned about pictures from him. I knew nothing about scripts, but I began to accumulate the impression that there were an awful lot of titles in the Marion-Sullivan script which we, Syd and I, were shooting. I counted them and found there were three hundred and ninetyseven. I hunted up Connie's two previous production records and did some figuring. The result was that I found that if the Dulcy script were shot as these experts prepared it, and the titles were spaced according to the average of the two previous pictures, and Dulcy released in that form, it would reach the public in twenty reels. Two of the highest paid writers in the business had given their employer a script containing twenty reels of action for a seven reel picture. Surely there are a lot of unknown writers who could do better than that. One fault of this industry of many faults is that it has a too great respect for names. An actor's name has box office value and in paying him a big salary the producer merely is buying something that he can sell at a profit. The names of directors and writers have no box office value, but their work has. If producers would pay them with strict regard

for the quality of their work and none for the prominence of their names we would have a new crop of high salaried persons.

Directors and Close-up Curse

DIRECTOR takes up the cudgels for himself and others of his kind. "You assail directors", he writes me, "for their over indulgence in close-ups. I am willing to bet that ninety-nine per cent of the directors agree with the point you are making, but they can not agree that they are to blame. How far do you suppose a director could get if he refused to shoot all the close-ups that stars and producers demand? Of course we don't have to shoot them, but as the alternative is starving to death I imagine we will continue to." This correspondent is quite right. I know most directors are helpless, but as they are in the front ranks of picture people it is natural that they are the ones I aim at when I fire my pop-gun. I know we have many stars with intellects weak enough to lead them to believe that close-ups of them are valuable. and influence strong enough to insist upon having them. The producers who indulge this foolishness are absolute asses. There is only one thing that will do a star or producer any good, and that is a good picture. As too many close-ups harm a picture it follows that they harm also the star and producer. The weirdest idea prevailing in this picture wilderness of weird ideas is that of the producer who feels that he is getting a better run for his money when his highest salaried players are shown in close-ups rather than in medium or long shots. Everything in a picture should be in it solely on account of its story value and not on account of any other consideration. If story value were the only consideration governing the making of every picture, as it should be, close-ups would disappear almost entirely and pictures would be better because of it. It is of more value to any star to be seen always in good pictures than it is to be shown in close-ups. Unfortunately few of our stars have brains enough to grasp this fact. Their overwhelming conceit leads them to believe that the public is sighing for their enlarged faces, reasoning that is harbored only in enlarged heads. Meaningless close-ups that have no story or pictorial value have just about killed Tom Meighan. I see he indignantly is denying that he is retiring from the screen, a matter that the public is taking out of his hands. Those responsible for Colleen Moore's pictures are reducing her box office value by making her poor stories still worse by spattering them with too many close-ups. Nearly all the other stars have the same weakness. Florence Vidor spoils her stories by her conviction that she is the attraction and her insistence in making it dominate her productions. But perhaps it is unfair to single any out when there are so many suffering from the same delusion. But in spite of what my correspondent writes I believe many of our directors have contracted the close-up habit and have fixed it firmly as part of the routine of their shooting. Close-ups of minor characters without importance enough to demand them are numerous. This afternoon I read the script of an important picture now in production. It calls for scores of close-ups for which there is no excuse whatever. There even are close-ups of a parrot and the tail of a snake, either one, I'll grant you, having alluring possibilities as relief in the endless procession of enlarged faces of the star. When we have more brains in picturemaking we will have fewer close-ups. There is no place in the art for both.

Making the Most of Dramatic Scenes

THEN we get farther along with our crop of directors who are maturing into people who are getting an insight into the art of making pictures, I hope we will develop a few choice specimens who will have a thorough knowledge of the fundamentals of drama. never have read anything on the subject, consequently I can not quote authorities to support any argument I may advance, but I believe one can arrive at an understanding of its meaning better by a process of reasoning for himself than by consulting the writings of others on the subject. Human emotions can not be standardized, and all drama is emotional. If a director would give his reasoning faculties full rein in considering his treatment of his big scenes I believe we would have more powerful dramatic scenes on the screen. Let us go into the high places and select a scene as a sample for us to take apart to discover if it contains everything that could have been put into it. Hotel Imperial was supervised by Erich Pommer, undoubtedly the possessor of the greatest picture mind in the world, and directed by Mauritz Stiller, a great artist in his line. Such a combination should be able to realize all the dramatic possibilities of any scene. The big moment of this picture is when Pola Negri debases herself to save her sweetheart from a charge of murder. George Seigman had been showering clothes and jewels on her, and her statement that the Austrian officer had been in her room when a murder was committed enrages Seigman. upbraids Pola for accepting his gifts while being untrue to him. Angrily he tries to tear the rich dress from her. The scene is enacted in a room filled with officers of the army which Seigman commands. I contend that it would have been much more dramatic if it had taken place in a room in which Pola and Seigman were alone together. To start with, I do not believe any general on earth would make such an exhibition of himself in front of his staff, but that is not the important point. No matter how enraged Seigman became we know that he would do nothing violent to Pola, for the other officers would restrain him if he went too far, even if their presence in itself did not restrain him. Therefore as soon as the scene starts we know it has its limitations. If Seigman, cold as ice and hard as steel, had ordered Pola to her room and followed her there, we would not know what to expect. Without witnesses and unrestrained Seigman might go even to the length of killing her. Her peril would be real and without obvious limitations. Being a scene that in real life undoubtedly would be enacted without witnesses, it would have a truer ring if presented that way on the screen. There would be nothing in it to distract the attention of the audience from the two characters. The fewer people there are in a dramatic scene the more dramatic is the scene. Some day I hope to see a director stage an intensely dramatic scene with only one person in it, a character who is having a terrific battle with his own conscience. Next to that in interest is the scene with but two people in it. In the Hotel Imperial scene there are

only the two people carrying it, yet there are dozens of other people in it. Messrs. Pommer and Stiller know how to make pictures, but I can not agree with them that their treatment of this scene came anywhere near realizing all the possibilities that were in it.

John W. Considine Jr., United Artists Studios

Y DEAR Johnnie,-Back a bit, when this century was quite young, I used to get off a street car in Seattle and often I would see an umbrella and a pair of shoes coming towards me in the rain. The umbrella almost reached the sidewalk and the shoes, of course, did, and somewhere between the two there was a chubby little boy, a most engaging little fellow with pink cheeks, merry eyes and a smile that he was not over-generous with. I would talk to him through the umbrella which so completely covered him, and sometimes he would swing it out of the way and smile up at me. But that was not often. For no reason at all he was hard to see. Finally I adopted a plan to outwit him. I would make him promise one day that I could see him the next, and always he kept his promise. You were the chubby little boy. From the time we lived across from one another on that Seattle street I have watched your career with interest and I am glad that we are again in the same town, you heading an organization that makes pictures and I editing a paper that tells you how to make them. But why do you still carry the obliberating umbrella over your head? That early habit of being hard to see seems to persist still. A few weeks ago I phoned Miss Reber that I wanted to see you. Of course you were in conference. I've been phoning ever since without success, so I will revert to my early method and speak down to you through your umbrella without asking you to let me have a look at you while we converse. In a picture I reviewed a long time ago I noticed a young fellow's work and I went to a lot of trouble to find out who he was. I discovered that his name was Gilbert Roland. I gave him a good notice and you gave him a long-time contract. Lately I have seen a couple of "quickies" in which another young fellow did such good work that I ran him to earth and found out that he is Charles Gerson, son of Paul Gerson. I wanted to tell you about the youth, whom I don't know personally, but who, I am confident, would have a brilliant screen career if he got into good hands. He has the good looks which are a screen asset, but what most impressed me about him is his ability to act. He must have been put through a long course of drilling by his dad, for he certainly knows how to behave before the camera. I do not know if you still are on the lookout for young leading men, but if you are you should send for this young fellow and have a talk with him. I won't bring him to the attention of anyone else until you have had a reasonable time to act. Fix the appointment for the time when Miss Reber is at lunch in order that he can get in to see you. My only interest in

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IMPORTED DIRECT BY WM. K. WILLIAMSON

934 FOURTH ST. SANTA MONICA Gerson is the pleasure I derive from giving promising youngsters a leg-up. I haven't missed my guess on any of them yet and if this fellow doesn't turn out to be a crackerjack leading man I'll eat your umbrella. You've had it over your head too long, anyway. — W. B.

"The Divine Lady" Good Screen Material

COME of the Armchair Adventures about which Edgcumb Pinchon writes so delightfully take place on the other side of my reading table-a low thing with a trough for books underneath and a place on top for proof-sheets and the big pad upon which I write-that stands between us when he visits me. An armchair has his dent in it and I keep for him a brand of tobacco that I will not smoke myself, nor can I educate him up to the soothing delight of my own mixture. He has a rare taste in pictures, as well as in books, and I see that in his department in this Spectator he acquaints his readers with some of the canvases which hang on my walls, something that had not occurred to me to do, although as I read his columns this week I can see that the fact that a Romney hangs over my fireplace, flanked on one side by what I think is one of the most exquisite landscapes that Richard Wilson ever painted, and on the other by one of William Barraud's famous English hunting scenes, is a matter of interest to those who love Old Masters. However, I would make no mention of them now if Pinchon had not left me an opening in his reference to the Romney. He says it is one of the most famous works of that famous master, and there he is wrong. I'll grant that it is one of Romney's greatest, but part of its charm to me is the fact that it is not famous. It has a romance of its own which has kept it out of exhibitions. Of the thirty or so portraits of Lady Hamilton which Romney painted, the one that hangs over my fireplace is the only one showing his "divine lady" in an unconventional pose. There is little doubt, according to all authorities, that the painter was infatuated with the woman whose charms almost led to the undoing of Lord Nelson, and this painting is his own intimate study of her, an artistic tribute to the love he bore her, painted for himself and retained by him until he died. Then it went into a private collection, where it reposed for a century and a half, its existence known only to a few, and no fame came to it. I have seen Romneys in London, Paris and New York, but I have seen none other that I like as I do the one that looks down upon me now as I write. I have not seen the two that Henry Huntington has brought to Pasadena and for which he paid a quarter of a million dollars, but I have an idea that I would not be willing to make a trade of mine for one of his. Pinchon reviews The Divine Lady in this issue. It is a book that should be brought to the screen. A powerful romance could be written around the Emma Hart who became Lady Hamilton and whom crowned heads honored in spite of the life she led. When the choice of an actress to play the leading role is being determined the interested director may make a pilgrimage to my fireplace and gaze upon the living image of the original. If he can find in the portrait the slightest resemblance to any woman now on the screen he will make a discovery that has eluded me. We have so many beautiful women in Hollywood that one would think that any famous beauty of

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other place or other time must look at least a little like one of ours, but in my Lady Hamilton I can see no single feature that recalls one that I have seen on the screen. Romney was adept at preserving the likeness while enhancing the beauty of his subjects. He has made Lady Hamilton gorgeously beautiful without producing a model that matches any that the screen displays.

Norma Talmadge In Superb Picture

DD one to my list of the ten best pictures of 1927. The first I put on it was Flesh and the Devil, notable for the fine direction of Clarence Brown. Then I added Resurrection, largely on account of the superb performance of Dolores del Rio. Now comes Camille, notable for three things, and it is such a perfect production that it is impossible to say which of the three makes the greatest contribution to it. Fred de Gresac wrote a highly meritorious screen version of the Dumas book, Fred Niblo gave it a quality of direction that he himself never achieved before, and Norma Talmadge contributes the greatest performance she ever has given to the screen. These three perfections merge into one perfect whole. It is an interesting fact that all three of the pictures which I like so well have the so-called "unhappy" ending, although in each of them the ending is logical. The De Gresac treatment of the Camille story is intelligent and in some respects novel. At the outset it is shown that the heroine is dead and her lover heartbroken. Thus you know at the start, before you have become interested in the leading characters, that their love affair has had a tragic ending. The adapter was presented with the difficulty of making Camille the mistress of a man of wealth without depriving her of the sympathy of the audience. She is shown as having contact with the world of wealth and fashion through the instrument of her position in a modiste establishment. This makes logical her easy manner when she becomes wealthy and fashionable. Next she is shown being subjected to the utmost cruelty in a squalid and forbidding home, in front of which the rich man waits with his carriage and pair. Circumstances forced her into his arms. The characterization that Norma Talmadge gives Camille is similar to that which will have to be given Lady Hamilton if The Divine Lady be brought to the screen. Lady Hamilton herself tells us what her own views are. "You have known me in poverty and prosperity," she writes to the artist, George Romney, from Caserta in Italy, "and I had no occasion to have lived for years in poverty and distress if I had not felt something of virtue in my mind. Oh, my dear friend, for a time I own through distress virtue was vanquished. But my sense of virtue was not overcome." The De Gresac adaptation keeps the sense of virtue alive throughout the characterization. Another sensible departure is the modernizing of the story. Camille is not a story of a period. It belongs to to-day as well as to yesterday. When it first appeared in book form it was strictly up-to-date. To be up-to-date on the screen is logical. Donald hit it off in one of his reviews in which he said that he did not like costumes which were just old enough to be funny and not old enough to be romantic. Camille is modern in every respect, therefore the impression is made that it deals with the affairs of real people. The fact that its locale is Paris is not

stressed particularly. The story itself is what is put forward, not the time nor the place. And it is a great love story, beautifully written with a single thought for telling the story and none for dragging in anything that does not belong.

Niblo's Direction Is a Great Achievement

HE opening sequence of Camille made me a little dubious. I thought Fred Niblo had started off at a pace that he could not continue. I did not think it was probable that I was going to see a picture that would live up to the promise of such early scenes. But my fears proved groundless. The production is absolutely even throughout. It flows along smoothly, pleasing to both the eye and the mind. It takes itself too seriously to pause for the introduction of anything foreign to it. Only as a Spectator space-filler does it fall down. When I say that Fred Niblo's direction is intelligent and without a flaw I have exhausted a subject which in most productions is good for one of my longest paragraphs. When Camille is released I think it will be agreed generally that it is the best thing that Fred has given us, which gives it a high place among motion pictures. Not even in Smilin' Through did Norma give such a capable performance as she does in Camille. The script must not be given all the credit for the fact that Camille holds the sympathy of the audience throughout. Norma must have felt a deep pity for Dumas' character and she plays her with understanding and feeling that reach out from the screen. There is not a too great bid for sympathy, nor a too sentimental appeal for tears. Norma's Camille is a woman just too weak to resist wealth and luxury as alternatives to poverty and suffering, but strong enough in the end to sacrifice everything to the great love she has for Armand. Her performance is shaded admirably and in every phase of it she reflects a matured art that adds to her standing as a screen actress. Armand is played by Gilbert Roland, a young man making his first bid for serious recognition. John W. Considine Jr. signed him on a long-term contract after reading my praise of his performance in The Plastic Age, and in Camille the young fellow justifies the judgement of both of us. He is equal to the demands of every scene and when the picture is released he will be rated as a leading man who gives promise of speedily ranking with Jack Gilbert and Ronald Colman. He has a more masculine appeal than Gilbert and a sincerity as great as Colman's. His mechanics need perfecting, but that is something that comes naturally with experience. Gilbert Roland has arrived. A notable feature of the picture is the slight stress that is laid on the fact that Camille was a consumptive. Fred Niblo's handling of her death is a notable piece of direction, sympathetic, tender and beautiful. At the end we see only the patient's hand holding a camellia, first upright and then drooping slowly until it lies still among the lace of the bed covering. No more exquisite death-bed scene ever was presented on the screen. I am sorry that a love scene between Camille and Armand, and later a scene in which Armand denounces Camille, were shown in close-ups. They are the only flaws in an otherwise perfect picture, but fortunately are not serious enough to detract greatly from the manifold excellencies of the production, although not excusable on that account.

Both are scenes that should have been presented in double close-ups or medium shots. W. Cameron Menzies has given the picture a notably artistic production and the camera work of Oliver Marsh is an outstanding example of effective photography. The picture was made by the United Artists organization for First National release, the last of Norma's productions for such release. John W. Considine Jr. supervised the picture for Joseph M. Schenck, and to him must go a great deal of credit for the great results accomplished.

"Rookies" Is Quite an Entertaining Comedy

THEN I learned that M.-G.-M. had decided to feature George K. Arthur and Karl Dane in comedies I was a little dubious about the success of the venture. I was satisfied that in Arthur it had one of the best comedians on the screen, but of Dane I had my doubts. But after seeing the first picture in which the team appears I am willing to concede cheerfully that Harry Rapf -I think it is he who supervises this unit-knew a devil of a lot more about it than I did. It's a great team and Dane is very much a part of it. The picture is called Rookies and its setting is a Citizens' Military Training Camp. It succeeds in being funny without making the service ridiculous as Behind the Front makes the army, or vulgar, as What Price Glory? makes the marines. Byron Morgan in his story and Sam Wood with his direction make the central characters normal human beings, consequently the things that happen to them are funnier than they would be if Arthur and Dane had been characterized as hopeless asses, as Beery and Hatton were presented in the pictures in which they teamed. Rookies is just a series of incidents, most of them exceedingly funny and the last one most thrilling. Interspersed is some vulgarity that M.-G.-M. should be ashamed to sponsor. The studio people will defend the vulgarity on the ground that preview audiences laughed at it. Any lapse from good taste on the screen is greeted with laughter, which in no way excuses it. If an excuse for vulgarity be the laughter it causes, a producer should be still more vulgar and create still more laughter. One sequence in Rookies falls down, and it is interesting to speculate on the reason for it. George Arthur is shown garnering a large collection of ants. We know he is going to use them to square accounts with Dane. A review takes place and we see ants crawling on Dane's neck. It is not funny because we do not know how Arthur managed it. The only interesting feature of comedy of this sort is how it is done. If Arthur had been shown sprinkling the ants on Dane's clothes, followed by Dane rushing in to dress hurriedly for the parade, the sequence would have been funny because the audience would anticipate a laugh. It would have waited for Dane's first reaction to the presence of the crawling creatures. But, on the whole, the picture is an excellent piece of screen entertainment. I base this opinion more on the uproarious laughter with which a large preview audience greeted it than upon my personal reaction to it. Its humor is obvious, which is not the kind of humor I like best in pictures, but I was the only member of my own family who did not vote it one of the funniest things ever presented on the screen, and if M.-G.-M. has pleased a mother, two daughters and a son, it need not worry

much about me. Metro should restrain any impulse that may develop to present Arthur and Dane in wildly ridiculous farces. No producer will have permanent success in stretching two-reelers into seven-reelers. These two Metro comedians can attain great popularity if presented in a series of stories that are knit together into sensible narratives and in characterizations that do not make idiots of them.

Great Photography Features "The Brute"

THE photography is a big feature of The Brute, Monte Blue's latest starring vehicle, soon to be released by Warners. The picture opens in Death Valley and Conrad Wells' camera has caught some of the most exquisite scenes of the wastes of sand that ever have been presented to the world. Their beauty is startling. They have a silvered effect that I never before have seen on the screen. One, in particular, showing Monte standing beside his horse, is a triumph of composition and superb photography. The desert scenes alone would give any picture the dignity of high art and no picture containing them could be altogether a failure. In my review of The Country Beyond I commented on the masterly manner in which Abe Freid caught the majestic beauty of the Canadian Rockies. He apparently has reached the decision that Abe Freid is not a name that reflects his wizardry with the camera and has changed it to Conrad Wells, which was his right and which he has the talent to make as famous as a cameraman can become. The photography in Barbara Worth has been praised, but it is not comparable with that in The Brute. In Wells, Irving Cummings has an artist he should cling to. Some of the credit for the artistic shots in both The Country Beyond and The Brute belongs, of course, to Cummings, the director who was wise enough to include them in the pictures. All Wells' art in the latest picture is not confined to the desert. A love scene between Blue and Leila Hyams has a setting of surpassing beauty, some of the effect of which is lost by Cumming's conventional treatment of the scene. After planting it he moves the camera up to show the love scene in medium shots and close-ups, thereby losing all the pictorial value of the setting. The scene would have been much more effective if it had been shown in a long shot without a camera change. With this single exception Cumming's direction is very fine. In fact, The Brute is one of the most capably directed pictures any American director has given us for a long time. There is everything in it, tender love scenes, fights, a gushing oil well, a dance hall, crowded streets and empty desert, which call for a wide range of directorial application, but, whatever the scene, Cummings handles it with regard for the individual treatment it should receive. He makes a really notable picture of The Brute. I saw it in preview and my estimate of it is based on the presumption that it will receive the revision it so obviously needed. There is one scene, showing an Indian trading his squaw, children and a hearse for a Ford, that has as much to do with the picture as the Declaration of Independent has, and I presume it will be one of the things eliminated. The story of The Brute is too engrossing to excuse the introduction of extraneous shots. The Indians have nothing to do with the story and the audience is not interested in them, conPage Eight April 16, 1927

sequently anything they do is a matter of no importance. Attempts to introduce vaudeville turns in motion pictures never will be successful. A story that can not be told right through from beginning to end without pauses for comedy turns by people who have no part in it is a story that should not be made into a picture.

Monte Blue Gives a Good Performance

ONTE Blue is one of our most versatile screen actors and one of our best. From the joyous comedian in So This Is Paris! to the revengeseeking mule driver in The Brute-from a deliciously funny Parisian doctor to a plainsman with a murderous impulse-he reveals an extraordinary range of screen acting and I am not quite sure that there is anyone else on the screen who could display a skill so inclusive. In The Brute he plays a serious part not seriously enough to make it drab. It is a role that builds up and when it reaches its high point Blue makes the most of it. The most dramatic moment is when he is walking along a crowded street at night. Of necessity it is shown in a long shot, the camera traveling with Blue as he plods relentlessly towards the villain, the coiled whip in his hand allowing us to anticipate what is going to happen when the two meet. It is a scene which proves in a striking manner the strength of my contention that as much drama can be shown in a long shot as in a close-up. Here we have a scene that can be handled only in a long shot and it is the most dramatic scene in a picture which contains a great deal of drama. We do not even see Monte's face. All we see is his figure weaving in and out among the crowds on the sidewalk, and the scene is dramatic because we know what it means. After I reviewed Summer Bachelors I phoned the Warner studio and asked the name of the girl who played opposite Matt Moore. I was informed that it was Leila Hyams. In my review I paid a high tribute to her performance, saying that I never had seen anyone more natural when in front of the camera. I was told it was her first picture, so The Brute must be her second. It is going some to become Monte Blue's leading woman with only one previous picture to your credit. Miss Hyams need have no worry about her screen career. Her performance in The Brute gives her a place in the front rank of leading women. It is so good that I am grateful to her for so soon demonstrating my ability as a good picker. Her part is one of the so-called colorless kind, an adjectival classification that can be given a performance, but never a role. Personality always will register. Leila Hyams has it, and her two performances that I have seen satisfy me that she has a brilliant career on the screen. If she can do so well, first with no previous screen experience, and next with experience gained in only one picture, it is reasonable to expect something really great from her when she has accumulated the experience that a dozen pictures will give her. She exactly fitted every scene in The Brute in which she was a central character. It was a relief to see real tears welling into her eyes in the scenes that called for them. One tires of glycerine so easily. Clyde Cook, Paul Nicholson and Carroll Nye contribute excellent performances to The Brute. In a picture so extraordinarily rich in production value we might excuse a shortage of real acting,

but The Brute is as generous in one way as the other. There are five outstanding parts and each of them is portrayed in a manner that reflects the highest credit on whoever is responsible for the casting. Cook is a delightful comedian, Nicholson a thoroughly detestable villain, and Nye an appealing juvenile. Warner Brothers have reason to be satisfied with this picture, and I predict that it will do a lot of good for everyone in the cast. I have appropriated for myself the role of Miss Hyams' discoverer and in that capacity I feel gratified that her second picture is going to be a success that will do credit to all those connected with it.

"Let It Rain" Quite All Right

HE only Douglas McLean picture I have seen since The Spectator came into being is Let It Rain. He doesn't seem to make many. I always like him on the screen, for his productions are clean and in the best of taste. I do not know him personally, but have enjoyed the experience of being fearfully high-hatted by him at the Ambassador one night. I wanted to make a suggestion to him, and to avoid another chill I will draw my chair closer to the fire, and make it now. Scotland is a rather romantic country and the Scottish character an interesting one. The name, Douglas McLean, is as Scotch as oatmeal porridge. Harry Lauder made millions with his Scotch characterizations, proving that they have box office value. The suggestion I was going to make to McLean was that he should capitalize his name and give us at least four all-Scotch pictures, even if he had to go to Scotland for his exteriors. We do not see enough real foreign backgrounds in our pictures, nor enough characterizations of other people. McLean may not look much like our conception of the typical Scotchman, but his name proves that he must be one, therefore it follows that he must look like one. I found Let It Rain quite an entertaining picture. I enjoyed it because it had nothing in it to offend me. I was impressed particularly by its freedom from close-ups. Most of the scenes take place on a battleship and all were shot in a manner that gave the audience the benefit of the interesting backgrounds. Apparently Douglas is not one of those stars who believe that their enlarged likenesses are all that the public wants. Let It Rain gives spoken titles to people in long shots, quite a sensible thing. At no time was there any confusion as to who was speaking. The picture on the whole has nothing dramatic in it and nothing to cause uproarious laughter, but it is entertaining because of its healthy atmosphere and because McLean and Shirley Mason give excellent performances. I liked particularly the manner in which the love story was developed. The two appear in medium shots and hold long conversations, but no spoken titles are given. It is a very sensible treatment of such scenes. The audience knows that the young people are saying those unimportant things of vast importance to lovers, silly nothings upon which love is built. The absence of spoken titles left the words to the imagination of the audience, enabling even a confirmed old bachelor to construe the conversations to fit the amorous adventures he surely must have had. One sequence in the picture falls down. It takes place in the interior of a mail car, which McLean saves from robbery by bandits. As

directed it is not convincing and lacks all the melodrama it might have had. It could have been thrilling or funny, but is neither. One bandit with a gun in his hand allows the unarmed McLean the freedom of the car. He does no shooting until McLean has him tied in a mail sack. Why he did not use his gun when he was more sure of his aim I do not know. Let It Rain treats the naval and marine services with dignity and all the characters in it are real, features for which the picture is to be commended. I forgive McLean for his high-hatting and thank him for the pleasant hour he gave me.

This One Killed By Poor Direction

HE Perfect Sap had everything in it to make it a good picture of its sort. It is a crook story set in sophisticated circles, allowing for an elaborate production and considerable action. Ben Lyon, Pauline Stark, Virginia Lee Corbin, Sam Hardy and Brand Whitlock have enough talent to provide satisfactory performances. The story has a definite plot and is interesting. But the picture as a whole is without much merit. It is worth while to inquire into the reason. I have had quite a lot to say of late about the use of close-ups. I maintain that they are used to an extent that is detrimental to pictures. I believe that The Perfect Sap is one picture that is ruined by too many of them. I arrive at this conclusion both directly and by process of elimination, for I can find no other reason for its lack of appeal. There is one entire sequence played entirely in close-ups. It is an interior scene, played in a room, but the room is not established. There are four characters in it, but at no time is their relation to one another shown. It is just a succession of faces. Not one of the close-ups is justifiable, even if the room had been planted at the outset to show where the scene was being enacted. The average audience viewing this picture and finding it dull, probably would not analyze it to discover the reason, but I am satisfied that the dullness can be attributed to such scenes as this one which could not interest an audience that did not know where it was taking place. All through the picture the same weakness is apparent, making inevitable the conclusion that The Perfect Sap is a poor picture because it received most unintelligent direction. Howard Higgin directed it under the supervision of Ray Rockett. Over-indulgence in close-ups seems to run in the Rockett family, for every picture supervised by brother Al has the same fault. It would be interesting to know who it is in the First National organization who thinks motion pictures should consist almost entirely of portraits. The direction throughout is very poor. Characters walk into scenes and turn to face the camera before speaking, movie stuff of the most obvious sort. In one scene the guests at a party are excited over a jewel robbery and flock around Sam Hardy, who plays a detective. It is his scene, consequently there is a wide lane through the crowd to enable the camera to catch him. It is a perfect example of stupid grouping. Whoever heard of an excited crowd splitting into two parts when its attention was focused upon one spot and when there was no reason for the wide line through its middle? Sam Hardy did not run quite true to form as a detective. He kept his hat on in the house all right, but he continually took his cigar out of

his mouth. Apparently Higgin does not know that detectives never remove their cigars from between their lips. That's how we know they are detectives, that and keeping their hats on in drawing-rooms. Ben Lyon gives a capable performance in this picture. Hitherto he has not been one of the screen actors about whom I am wildly enthusiastic, but I could find no fault with him this time. Brand Whitlock always impresses me with the sincerity of his work. In The Perfect Sap he gives a good performance of a gentleman crook. To sum up—The picture could have been an engrossing one filled with good acting if the direction had revealed the slightest idea that the man responsible for it knew what it was all about.

"Increasing Purpose" Is Highly Creditable

NE Increasing Purpose is another evidence of William Fox's determination to produce pictures with an intellectual appeal, irrespective of their conformity to established box office standards. The unforgettable If Winter Comes was the first production of the kind that I can remember Fox making. The latest attempt is as noteworthy as an attempt, but as a motion picture it does not rate as high as the other because it is not such good screen material. Nor does it have one central figure that provides an opportunity for a duplication of the success Percy Marmont achieved in his magnificent characterization in If Winter Comes. Edmund Lowe is very good in One Increasing Purpose, but it is a straight part that makes no great demands on an actor. But the picture is a highly meritorious one that reflects the greatest credit on the Fox organization. It is an honestly made picture. The spirit of the book is transferred to the screen acceptably and Harry Beaumont's direction reveals a thorough understanding of what was in Hutchinson's mind when he wrote it. The direction is sympathetic and intelligent, possessing an intellectuality comparable with that of the novel. Fox was not afraid to spend his money. He sent a company to England and it brought back many atmospheric shots which had both story and educational value. Bradley King's adaptation made wise use of these shots. He, too, caught the spirit of the book and turned out a script that is greatly to his credit as a fine piece of screen writing. When it came to casting the parts Fox gave Beaumont a collection of artists that any director should be proud to work with-Lowe, Huntly Gordon, Nickolas Soussanin, Holmes Herbert, George Irving, Lawford Davidson, Lila Lee, May Allison, Jane Novak and Emily Fitzroy. A good story, intelligent direction and a cast like this could result only in a first class picture, although I can see that it might not be one that would have a wide popular appeal. Readers of the book no doubt will be disappointed with it unless they sympathize with Fox's good intention in trying to compress an extended piece of literature within the limits of screen possibilities. They scarcely will excuse the failure to include in the picture one of the most interesting characters in the book, B. C. D., the novelist and longhaired genius, whose mode of life was the inspiration for Sim, the part played by Lowe, to embark on his evangelistic adventure. But I believe the number of people who read a book is so very small as compared with those who see a picture made from it that it can not make much

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difference in the success or failure of a picture whether it sticks to the original story or wanders away from it. There are some excellent performances in One Increasing Purpose. Holmes Herbert is compelling in a "mad scene" that would tax the powers of any actor. He is equal to its demands as he is to all other exactions of his part. Soussanin's performance is a remarkable one. I have seen him previously only in Hotel Imperial and know nothing of his background, but am convinced that in him the screen has a really great heavy. Lila Lee always is good. She is one of our most earnest young actresses and in this Fox picture does very well. And I don't think I ever saw Huntly Gordon give a more intelligent interpretation of a part than he does in One Increasing Purpose.

"Yankee Clipper" Is Without Merit

BOUT all the De Mille studio accomplished when it made The Yankee Clipper was the spoiling for picture purposes of an epoch in American history out of which a screen masterpiece could have been made. A picture doing it justice can not now be made for a long time, as no matter how worthy such a picture might be, it would not be successful if it rode too closely on the heels of this failure. De Mille has repeated with this bit of American history what Paramount did with the story of the U.S.S. Constitution, made a poor picture out of a good subject and in so doing spoiled the good subject for anyone else. But Old Ironsides, bad as it is, is better than The Yankee Clipper. The former is not so blatantly a movie. It falls down because it has no story, but the shots in it are handled satisfactorily. In The Clipper there is perhaps even more of a story, at least one that can be treated more intimately, for it deals with but two ships, while Old Ironsides includes the navies of different nations; but as a picture it suffers because the camera plays the leading part. In every scene all the characters face the camera. In the whole picture there is not a single instance of correct grouping. In the love scenes between Elinor Fair and William Boyd they stand shoulder to shoulder facing the camera and they speak their titles at the camera. When Junior Coghlan, the only member of the cast who does any acting, becomes the center of interest in one scene, sailors run to him, turn to face the camera and take up their positions behind him and in line with him. The president of the United States enters his cabinet room and instead of his chair being pulled up to the table to enable him to look down it, as all presiding officers do, the chair is pulled back in order that the position of the president would have him facing the camera, even though it made it necessary for him to toss his words over his shoulder at those with whom he was conversing. Very few of our directors seem to have made a study of grouping. I would like to show some of them two of Anton Von Werner's steel engravings which hang on my walls. In one, the Berlin congress of 1878, there are twenty-eight important people-Bismarck, Von Bulow, Lord Russell, Lord Salisbury, Disraeli, and others and the engraving contains an excellent portrait of each. It is full of action, there being nothing stilted about it; the grouping being entirely natural although each of the twenty-eight men "faces the camera." The other, the capitulation of Sedan, contains sixteen portraits and has

even more action in it. Again the sixteen "face the camera" without a suggestion that they have been posed with the sole purpose of registering their faces. Bismarck, Molkte and other great men interested in the seige and defense of Sedan fairly live in this superb engraving. I don't suppose Von Werner ever earned as much in six months as most of our directors earn in one, but he certainly possessed an ability that nearly all directors lack. A director would get better results if he forgot all about the camera when he was composing a scene. His sole thought should be for natural grouping, leaving it up to the cameraman to shoot the scene as best he could. This method would give us better pictures, not such a stilted and unconvincing one as The Yankee Clipper.

Very Weak Story Is Handled Poorly

OUT it is not only in the grouping that The Clipper falls down. I do not understand how De Mille himself, Bill Sistrom and the others responsible for the studio's output, could view this picture in the projection room and content themselves with the thought that it was worthy to go forth under the De Mille trademark. Until the story reaches China it drags wearily. I yawn again as I recall it. It betrays its own weakness by its efforts to strengthen itself by taking in its embrace bits of lamentable comedy that do not advance the story. It is obvious that anything that does not advance a story must retard it, and a good picture can not be made out of a story that stutters. The only interesting feature of the production is the acting of Junior Coghlan, and his character is a dragged-in one. Walter Long does a savage bit, one of the half dozen thoughts which the picture starts, but never finishes. In his most fiendish way he tells Miss Fair that he can rescue her from Boyd; she tells John Miljan about it, and that is all there is to it. It doesn't come off. It is beyond my comprehension how a modern studio can turn out a story so absurdly constructed. But the most glaring weakness of this weak picture is its failure to realize the possibilities of its greatest feature, the race from an Oriental port to Boston Harbor of the English and American ships. There was nothing exciting at the start of the race, during it or at the finish. Not one shot while the race was on suggested speed, consequently it did not build up to give the finish any thrill. There was no excuse for the failure of the picture to make the most of the race. There was a fine chance at the beginning for some beautiful and thrilling shots. The moment when a yacht or a full-rigged ship comes into the wind, heels over and begins to plow up spray always makes a beautiful picture. If the race had opened with scenes of great activity on board both boats, to establish the excitement that prevailed and which the audience would share; followed by a long-shot showing the ships coming into the wind, their sails bellying; the two alongside as they gathered speed; close-ups of the bows, at first gently stirring the water, then filling the screen with the furrow they were cutting-if this treatment had been accorded the beginning of the race it would have created in the audience enough excitement to have lasted until the end. As presented, however, its slow and uninteresting opening made the progress of the race a matter of little interest. For the finish there should have

been a camera in an airplane, or on a boat ahead of the racers, showing the on-coming clippers growing larger, side by side in the same shot, until they completely filled the screen. The inefficiency that characterized the whole production reached the peak of its effectiveness in the race sequence. Perhaps I should exclude John Miljan from my sweeping denunciation of the acting. His part was utterly inconsistent and as bad as everything else in the picture, but his interpretation of that kind of character was a really good piece of work. Boyd poses throughout the picture, grins sometimes, frowns occasionally, but never acts, which I attribute to Rupert Julian's direction. Nothing more inadequate than Miss Fair's performance could be imagined.

Some Mistakes, Mostly Nautical

THE presence in The Yankee Clipper of characters representing President Zachary Taylor and Queen Victoria gave the picture historical verisimilitude that the story did not live up to. Taylor's appearance definitely fixes the period of the story which was at least two years before the "Lord of the Isles", the British ship which figures in it, was built. Incidentally, the "Lord of the Isles" was an iron ship, while that in the picture is a wooden one. It also is worthy of passing note that the marine history of the United States does not record the existence of a vessel called "The Yankee Clipper". The chief characteristic of the clippers that gave American shipping such prestige was the whiteness of their sails. The shining white cotton duck sails were famous. In the picture the American ship had sails of old, patched and stained canvas. The anchors shown were of a type not made until a few decades after the period of the picture. I do not understand what a China Sea typhoon was doing off the shores of South America. It would seem that the quite well known pampero, a meteorological disturbance peculiar to the region so carefully indicated, would have been quite as satisfying, particularly as it is characterized by a suddenness and degree of violence sufficiently dramatic for motion picture purposes. But despite its customary rapid approach it is inconceivable that any competent ship master, however engrossed by the blandishments of an attractive though disdainful lady, should have failed to take ample warning from the barometric and numerous other indications of an impending storm available to him. To have the lookout sight it as he would a spouting whale, would be all right in a nautical farce, but scarcely fits in a picture that takes itself seriously. The storm scenes were handled very well, particularly the boarding seas, but there was a sad lack of seamanship displayed in maneuvering the ships in the miniatures. It does not take much of a sailor to know that the way the American boat was handled on her arrival in Foochow Harbor was quite impossible. Even an amateur yachtsman knows that a ship's way must be checked before the anchor is dropped. In the picture the clipper actually bears off without touching a brace as the anchor is let go. This handling would have accelerated the ship's speed through the water to an extent that would have caused the chain to snap when the anchor took hold. It is an unwritten law of the sea that the national colors must be hoisted and lowered flying. In the picture they



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were broken out in a close-up. Historically the story is full of holes. At a time when the American clippers were the speediest vessels afloat, England boasting nothing that could compare with them in that respect, Lord Huntington in the picture tells Queen Victoria that the American ships were lacking in speed. That title would have been all right if it had been followed by a shot of the queen coyly slapping the lord with her fan and exclaiming, "Oh, you go on!" I have gone into all these details, omitting the mention of many others, both nautical and historical, that could be included, to show the inefficient manner in which the De Mille production force handled this picture. If it had recognized its own inability to do the subject justice it might have left this picturesque period in American history to more competent producers who could have given us a great picture. It might have practiced a little longer on Gertie's garter before it tackled anything as important as this glorious epoch in the annals of American shipping.

"There You Are" Pleasing Comedy

ERHAPS the chief feature of There You Are is the capable manner in which Ed Sedgwick directed it. But F. Hugh Herbert wrote a clever screen version of his novel. And Conrad Nagel and Edith Roberts acted their parts splendidly. Likewise Ralph Spence wrote some pretty good titles. The whole thing is clever and entertaining. I am convinced that this is due largely to the fact that it is almost entirely free from close-ups. The story is told mainly in deep medium shots, and not a little of it in long shots. In reviewing several First National pictures of late I stated that the fact that they were little better than a succession of close-ups practically ruined them, although fairly good pictures might have been made from the stories if they had been directed properly. There You Are rather supports my argument. As Sedgwick directed it the audience must feel that the whole story, so to speak, is before it at all times. M.-G.-M. gave it one of its thoroughly satisfactory productions and we never are allowed to lose sight of the pictorial effectiveness of the settings. At all times the picture is satisfying to the eye; we do not lose sight of the relation of the characters to one another, and there is none of that ceaseless jumping from one close-up to another that makes so many pictures tiresome to look at. As a light comedy the story is clever. We allow comedies some latitude, so may excuse this one for side-stepping the fact that a simple explanation by Nagel would have ended the baby episode before it got really started. I believe, though, that even in rollicking comedies scenes can be made consistent and can gain comedy value thereby. For instance, Edith Roberts is locked in a closet in an office for three hours. At the end of that time she is shown standing by the door, asleep, in order that she will fall into Nagel's arms when he opens the door. No one can stand upright without supports and go to sleep. Her natural position would have been lying on the floor and it would have been funnier for Nagel to have found her in that position as he could have imagined that she was dead and built up comedy on such an idea. In another scene Nagel puts a telegram telling of his impending elopement with George Fawcett's daughter among some papers which he hands to Fawcett. He is afraid to

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TO AL COHEN:

You thank me for the nice things I have said about your screen writing. No one owes me any thanks for anything I write in my own columns. I write only what I think, and you can't thank me for thinking.

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retrieve it, although it would have been a simple thing for him to do. There would have been more comedy, and more reason, in it if he had no idea what had happened to the telegram and had made a frantic effort to find it. Nagel acts his part most capably and he would build a great reputation for himself as a comedian if Metro would put him in more stories as clever as this one. He is an excellent actor when he has a part that gives him an opportunity. Miss Roberts likewise gives a capital performance. She has a fine sense of comedy and a great deal of the success of the picture is due to her good work. Eddie Gribbon never fails to be funny. The screen has few better comedians. George Fawcett, sterling actor, is cast happily in this picture. The fellow who plays the effeminate hotel clerk, whoever he is, is a good bet that producers are overlooking. He is very funny and was responsible for many laughs. There You Are demonstrates that you have to have a well-knit story to make a comedy successful and that such story must be told by human beings, not by the bunch of half-wits as most of the people in comedies are characterized.

In the last Spectator I made reference to Clyde Cook's great ability as an actor. Since writing that paragraph I have seen him in The Brute. I am more than ever convinced that he has ability and a screen personality that should place him among the half dozen most popular picture artists. His sense of comedy is delicious, but he is more than a comedian. He has a human appeal comparable with Chaplin's and more marked than Langdon's, and no other comedians approach these three in that respect. There is tragedy in his eyes when he sees fit to put it there, a pathetic appeal, a witsfulness that even Chaplin can not attain. His mental equipment, therefore, is as great as that of any other actor appearing on the screen, but in addition to it he has a physical ability that none other possesses. He has extraordinary skill as a tumbler and contortionist and a pair of legs even funnier than Leon Errol's. If some wise producer would get hold of Clyde Cook and put him in the right stories he would be a sensation. There is nothing personal in my praise of him. I never have seen him off the screen and his name even is not on The Spectator's subscription list, two conditions that I hope will be remedied before long.

The Spectator always would like to give credit where it is due, but it can not remedy the screen's deficiencies in that respect. An issue or so ago I praised the titles written for some picture by George Marion and received an emphatic telegram from Gene Towne saying that he had written them. As the screen gave credit to Marion all I could do was to accept it as my authority, which always is my rule. The whole system of screen credit is about as rotten as everything else connected with production. Through no volition of my own I have become a near approach to a father confessor for many picture people and am the recipient of much information which is not part of The Spectator's policy to print. I know of scores of instances where the work of unknown people with brains has been credited on the screen to famous people with precious little, but I can not do battle for the submerged geniuses. Until motion pictures become honest the place to fight for credit is in the studios, not in The Spectator.

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AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator's 16-Year-Old Critic

(There has been a very sick young man in The Spectator household. His department is short this issue, for he took to his bed after writing six paragraphs, ten being the mark he usually aims at. The last three were written when he had high fever and considerable pain. But the purpose of this note is to explain that there will be nothing from him in the next issue, his first absence from our pages since The Spectator started. Journalistic instinct rather than paternal pride, makes me believe his department is acceptable to Spectator readers, but I would like to hear from them regarding it. Some of the letters, I hope, will cheer, and hasten, his convalescence.—W. B.)

H OTEL IMPERIAL is the second picture of Pola Negri's which I enjoyed. The other one was Barbed Wire, and they were both done under the supervision of Erich Pommer. With two such good pictures as Barbed Wire and Hotel Imperial behind her, Pola Negri has a good start back to good pictures. Whether she will keep up her start and con-tinue to make good pictures, or whether she will slump again, remains to be seen. Her performance in Hotel Imperial was as fine as hers usually are, but George Seigman stole the picture. His portrayal was one of the best balanced I ever have seen on the screen; because just when he was most villainous, he would get an opportunity to show what a fine soldier he was. His work would have featured any picture. James Hall's performance was somewhat over-shadowed by the star's and the heavy's, but was quite capable. They were such a heterogeneous collection that the few that were really good got lost in the shuffle. There was even an attempt to put some wise-cracking That was the last straw. titles in. Much of Hotel Imperial's merit lay in the fine characterizations. Every one was done excellently in a different way.

M. G. M. is the first of the producing units to wake up to the wonderful picture possibilities in the Citizens' Military Training Camp. From that start they have made one of the funniest pictures I have seen for months. The picture was no work of art; there was no story to speak of; but it was funny just the same. The titles of Joe Farnham, of course, were about the biggest feature of the picture; but there was a great deal of funny action, too. Before I go any farther, it might be a good idea to say that the picture was Rookies, featuring George K.

Arthur and Karl Dane. To anyone who has ever been a rookie, or ever seen a rookie outfit perform for the first time with rifles, the picture was great. George Arthur made a wonderful rookie, just as Dane made a good veteran. The scenes during the drill were the funniest, and it is too bad there weren't more of them. I don't often laugh until it hurts at what I see on the screen; but during those drill scenes, I feared for my ribs. The rest of the audience apparently got just as much kick out of it as I did. Although there were a few liberities taken with military regulations, the picture as a whole stuck amazingly close to them.

ETROPOLITAN is going to make up for Corporal Kate, if it makes a few more like The Heart Thief. This picture, which was very capably directed by Nils Olaf Chrisander, was very well done and managed to keep me interested right up to the final fade-out. That shows it must have been good, because I had to sit through Paradise For Two just before it was shown. The opening sequence was a bit jerky and vague, but as soon as the picture got fairly started, it flowed along nicely. I said in a previous number that Goldwyn had a wonderful team of cameramen in Barnes and Brannigan. They had better look out, because Henry Cronjager, who filmed The Heart Thief, did one of the finest jobs that has ever come from Metropolitan. Chrisander had a wonderful cast in this picture. Nearly all the leads were performers of recognized ability. Robert Edeson did very well, and so did Charles Gerrard and Joseph Schildkraut. Lya de Putti, although she looked out of place with blonde curls, did very well. However, the member of the cast I liked best was Bill Bakewell. It was the first time I had seen him on the screen, but his work was excellent. However, after all is said and done, Mr. Chrisander himself was the biggest reason for the excellence of the picture. If he continues to make pictures like this one, he will be one of the biggest directors in the business in a short

HARACTER actors in the moving pictures have an easy life, because they stick out so far from the members of the cast who are doing just straight acting that they are conspicuous. That is probably the reason why nearly every actor and actress desires character work. It is so easy to steal the picture when the actor is stacked up against those who have no chance to do very much act-

ing. Of course this applies only to pictures with the lesser stars, as no one has yet stolen any pictures from the stars of the United Artist organization. Since United Artists' pictures are the exception rather than the rule, the argument is fairly logical. The most striking illustration of this fact was the performance of the man who had the title role in The Magician, because his success was more efficient casting than acting ability. He had a very vicious look, which stood him in good stead when it became necessary for him to be villainous. Comedy relief actors also are overestimated as a rule, although there are some very fine ones, like Clyde Cook, who deserve all the favor they get. With even fair direction, a come-dian can take the picture quite easily, even if he is not a particularly good actor. The hardest part of the character actor's job comes when he sees all his best work cut out.

WHEN a famous book is put on the screen as a moving picture, it is not a good idea to see it if one has read the book. I guess that advice is good, because so many well-read people have given it. If I had read the book, perhaps I wouldn't have enjoyed One Increasing Pur-pose; in fact I had been told that I wouldn't like it, whether I had read the book or not. Well, to make a long story short, I saw it and liked it, although it was another fiendish device of Fox's to make me eat my words about not liking its pictures. The picture had a very fine cast, and all the characterizations were good. The cutting was poor, because the story jumped around so fast that it was slightly bewildering at times. The picture had exceeded length limits very evidently, but it could have been shortened some by leaving out a few scenes for which there were no use. The scene which was most unnecessary was the closing one. It was a shot of the hero driving away from the town where he had just held a meeting for the purpose of promoting happiness. The picture should have stopped at the scene which showed him talking to the crowd. On the whole, One Increasing Purpose is a picture which everyone should see.

THE PERFECT SAP is a picture which should be treated in the same way as Corporal Kate; no one in his right mind should go to it. We came in after the thing had started, which was very lucky, because there wasn't so much of it to be seen as there would have been if we had come in at the beginning. The

(Continued on page twenty)



ARMCHAIR ADVENTURES

By Edgcumb Pinchon



. . . . What shall you, O what shall you not, Sweet, do-The celestial temptress play And all mankind to bliss betray, With sacrosanct cajoleries And starry treachery of your eyes, Tempt us back to paradise?

-FRANCIS THOMPSON.

UCH OF my time, of late, has been valuably wasted commun-Armchair with one of the loveliest canvases on earth, Romney's famous portrait of Lady Hamilton, not as "Bacchante" nor as "Circe," but as

her own adorable self.

It is just the unveiled upper torso, a glowing gem of rosy flesh, mocking-ly alluring eyes, and lips of a hu-morous half-whimsical sweetness past expression. It is not "My Lady Hamilton," the friend of queens, that we have here, nor "The Divine Lady" of the distractingly charming "Attitudes," but "Emma," the village lass, in her rich vitality and naive loveliness, just as the peasant painter knew and loved her in the studio intimacies of an association as artistically celebrated as it was humanly impersonal and sweet.

In this respect the canvas stands unique. Thirty times did Romney record the beauty which crazed Europe; but only once did he vouchsafe us this immortal glimpse of laughing, michievous, girlish simplicity. And from the technical standnical standpoint I am inclined to count it among the greatest works of his brush. For while I have had opportunity to enjoy only six of these thirty portraits, these six are credited with being among the best; and they cannot, in my judgment, compete for the subtle rendering of flesh tones, beauty of composition and soft brilliancy of color, with this canvas which reigns as royally over the little group of Old Masters in Welford Beaton's library as ever the original did over the kings and captains of her day.

And so when a painter friend suggested that I read E. Barrington's The Divine Lady, a recent novel based on the life of Lady Hamilton, I seized upon the idea as an excellent excuse for sticking to my Armchair and ignoring telephone calls. There I sat, hour after hour, lifting my eyes automatically at the turn of each page to this painted witchery on the wall. until between the splendour of the canvas and the realism of the book I almost lost my head, like Francis Thompson on a similar occasion. But he fell in love with a statue! And that, of course, was an inexcusable performance, even though it gave us

the immortal lines which head these Adventures. But what burst of song would he have given us if he had sat in my Armchair?

Of the book, what shall I say? I am still a little dizzy from those eyes! But it is an Homeric tale, faithful to fact, and told in the reserved, yet sympathetic, style of the English woman novelist at her best. The prose has the charm of a cultivation which makes no effort at cleverness and achieves its effect by a constant sincerity lit with flashes of whimsical humour.

How shall I make this royal, prodigal tale live in a paragraph? Imagine to yourself Emma beside her father's forge, only fifteen, yet tall, with beautiful length of limb, full breasted, and carrying her little head loaded with masses of amazing auburn hair, like a young goddess. Her eyes are "sea-blue, and changeable as the sea itself. In one of them floats a little brown speck." The warmth of an abounding vitality glows in her cheeks and

expresses itself in her swift, lithe movements. * * *

She is poor, illiterate, and is put out "at service." Seduced and de-serted, still a child of fifteen, she becomes the mistress of a naval officer, then of a brutal country squire, who having gotten her with a child throws her again upon the street. Here Greville, the aristocrat, connoiseur in lovely things, finds her. To him she is not a human being but a new and more arresting "objet de luxe." Cool, wise, supercilious and firm-willed, he adopts her as mistress, child and pupil; and for four years devotes himself to her education. Especially he tries to eradicate from her simple psychology those elemental traits of bad temper and flamboyancy so distasteful to the British code.

His pupil is apt, too apt. Under his skilled tutelage her progress is amazing; and she comes to love him with all the devotion of a young wife. But Greville tires. By the most devious and patient diplomacy he manages to convey her into the arms of Sir William Hamilton, his elderly wealthy uncle, then British Ambassador at the Court of Naples. Not until much later does the unsuspecting Emma discern the trick which has been played upon her; and the dis-covery destroys in her "the last trace

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of her virginity of soul." Thence forword she must watch, and fight for her own.

Hamilton, another Greville, but warmer, kindlier, more humanely decent, she learns to love, first as mistress and finally as wife. This is the period of her glory. Her beauty, her wit, her matchless voice, her social gifts, her abundant generosity, and presently her amazing diplomatic skill, make her not only the idol of the people, and the favorite of the court, but the honored hostess of the Hamilton mansion and the delight of the distinguished guests who frequent it. Even the great Goethe pays her an abundant homage.

Presently comes Captain Nelson to the Hamilton home. Wretchedly unsupported by his home government in his task of destroying the French fleet in the Mediterranean, "without even ropes for the spars," he comes beg-ging for permission to re-victual in Neapolitan ports. There are difficluties in the way; for the King is secretly in league with Bonaparte, while the Queen is the outspoken ally of England. It is Emma who now shows herself a power to be reckoned

She not only over-rules the King's wishes and obtains his permis-

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sion for Nelson to re-victual his fleet sion for Nelson to re-victual his fleet wherever he pleases; but herself sends barge after barge of choice provisions to the half-starving British tars. Thence forward she is "The Lady of the Fleet," the toast of every Jack afloat, Nelson's trusted agent ashore, and one of the secret diplomatic powers of Europe. So greatly did Napoleon fear her skill and influence that he sent agents to Engfluence that he sent agents to England to dig up and publish the records of her past in the hope of discrediting her before the world.

When revolution fomented by Bonaparte breaks out in Naples it is Emma and Nelson who personally, like comrades-in-arms, spirit away the King and Queen with all their treasures to the safety of Palermo. The fame of this joint exploit resounds throughout Europe. Thence forward the names of these two magnificent children, for such they were, great captain and great courtesan, are inseparably linked.

Meanwhile Hamilton, already sixty when he first met Emma, has reached an age when he desires only peace and seclusion. With the consummate tact of his type he quietly withdraws from the situation while covering Emma with his name, and leaves these two predestined lovers to fulfil a passion as brief and tragic as it

is profound.
When at last, as a matter of both personal and official necessity, the three return to England, it is to be received with wild plaudits by the people; but with deadly coldness by the Court, For there is Fanny, Nelson's wife, now Lady Nelson! married life has been beautiful and untroubled, also it has been childless. Never has it been thrilling! Caught in the ancient dilemma Nelson loses his head and behaves badly. Emma behaves worse. British propriety is outraged. Only the birth of his little girl, Horatia, relieves for Nelson, the darkness of these days.

Then comes word that the French fleet has been sighted off the coast of France. Nelson knows well that he is going to his last fight. His child-like words "Kiss me, Hardy," as he lies bleeding to death on the deck of the Victory, close the tale.
What of "The Divine Lady?" The

novelist, who, in this case, is equally the historian, draws the curtain there, adding only that her life from that time went down into the darkness of

"tragic trivialities."

One could have wished it otherwise; but how could it have been? Those were the days when there were but four or five roles open to women; wife, spinster, druge, prostitute, mistress. A few actresses, a few women of literary genius managed to extricate themselves from the common lot. That is all. Emma from childhood was virtually compelled to be dependof some man. Her whole genius, therefore, had been poured forth in the art of reflecting with added

glories the mind and will of her master and mate. What room here was there for the achievement of an independent and self-poised person-

ality?

Hers was essentially the tragedy of unrestraint. She would restrain herself admirably to please her lord; but not to please her own soul. Therefore when the firm, kindly, clever hand of Hamilton was withdrawn, she became reckless, vain-glorious and flamboyant. Nelson, so far from curbing her for her own and his own good, abandoned himeslf helplessly to her luxuriant and imperious charm. Still her genuine love for him, the first spontaneous passion of her life, aided her to maintain some co-ordination of soul; but his death withdrew even this. What master could she hope again like Hamilton, what mate like Nelson?

Thereafter the rich energies of her nature were dissipated among the vulgarians which surrounded her and fed her vanity to feed their own. To the last, however, she retained her boundless generosity, her instinctive kindness, and even much of her vivacious charm. So sets her sun in "sullied splendour"—a child of the people who could not stand, (and who shall blame her?) an elevation above thrones.

Kant was a philosopher; Jesus was a sage. The one lived in his intellect alone; the other in the full splendour of his instincts and intuitions as well. To the philosopher the world is an object of thought, a challenge to his powers of intellectual statement; to the sage it is the garden of his spirit, the opportunity of his self-realization, a challenge to his instincts of freedom and dominion with their cry for "more life" and a "joy that is full."

The philosophers we know; they

safely are enshrined in the grand cultures of the world. But the sages few of us may know; for their lives shone too brightly on their time to escape being shrouded in popular myth, while their words were too simple to escape a like fate at the hands of the makers of creeds.

In the sage, as in a lesser degree in women and children, intuition leaps beyond the reasoned processes of thought. Brimmed with direct Vision he speaks after the Fact and of thought. in the plain language of the market. And if it be true that the common folk hear him gladly and lay hold of a new sense of the sweetness and majesty of life, it also is tragically true that this very simplicity robs succeeding generations of the like boon. For at his death his name is stolen to adorn the temples of the superstitious while his teaching, corrupted and misinterpreted, becomes the official cant of a new priesthood. Thus while the grand cultures are the lasting monuments of the philosophers, the great religions are merely the dishonored tombs of those few mighty ones-the sages, as the squalid Buddhism of India is of Lord Guatama, and our senile Christianity is of Jesus.

It is of special moment, therefore, when there appears among us one who combines in some measure the qualities both of the philosopher and of the sage, giving to the world a reasoned doctrine that also is an inspired way of life; for rarely do these two orders combine in a single personality. I can recall, indeed, but three: Sankara, Plotinus and Emerson. And while I do not wish to infer that Count Herman Keyserling will rank with these in his influence upon the world, or that he is more than a man of singular insight gifted with an unusual ability to express himself in terms acceptable to modern intelligence, there can be no doubt about the value of one so powerfully poised that in the midst of the most precise philosophic exactitude he never for a moment loses the splendour of his vision or the practicality of his evangel.

Count Keyserling lives in Darmstadt, Germany, where for some years he has been conducting what he calls "The School of Wisdom." Its aim,

he says is—
"to reconstruct life on the basis
of fully realized significance." That is an arresting sentence.

likewise is this-

"Realized truths evolve creative powers in the individual who is willing to let himself be trans-formed by their influence. The most wonderful thing in psychic life is that ideas clearly comprehended succeed, in the long run, by means of subconscious processes, in creating actual realities which correspond to them."

Both are sentences lustrous with inspiration and practical import. And that is why this subtlest of dialecticians is also like to be a highly provocative force in modern life; and to fulfil for us in good measure the double roles of a philosopher to the intellect and a sage to the heart and will. New truth we cannot have. New statement of immemorial truth we must have, or perish. And here comes

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one who seems fitted to make that restatement, and with such depth of vision and exactitude of thought as charms, challenges and inspires.

In this matter of grappling with the spiritual reality of our existence most of us who are not wholly asleep, I take it, have abandoned the ancient gods and creeds, and this by instinct rather than by any reasoned process of rejection. The "old-time religion" simply bores us, while the new-fangled cults and creeds which have striven to take its place in the popular esteem offend our good sense with their shallow and preposterous assumptions.

We are content, for the most part, that the simple endeavor to make something worth while out of our lives, should endow us with a measure of insight, sympathy and responsi-bility, and that friendship and family love, rather than prophet and priest, should be our mentors. We let it go at that, confident with Emerson that "a few sound instincts and a few plain rules suffice.'

It may not be a very exalted line of march but at least it makes no pretensions; and if I may offer a verdict upon my fellowmen it is that those who thus confide in life, and cannot, with the best will in the world, tell by what chart they sail, are the most securely trusted, the most readily loved.

And yet few of us are really satisfied. Our position is at best an honest compromise; for who has not felt at times that there is that to him which is not contained between his hat and boots? What-we-are forever presses against what-we-think-we-are. So that when there comes one who proposes so simple a doctrine as an effort toward a fuller realization of the significance which lurks beneath our routine of living, beneath our working, fighting, thinking, mating, we already are disposed to listen.

Something of Keyserling's quest for this "self-conscious realization of life in its every aspect," we have seen in his "Travel Diary of a Philosopher," a book, however, marred a good deal by an over-tortuous introspection and not a little pedantry. But these are defects completely banished from his latest work "The Book of Marriage." Here he strikes directly into his subject with a condensed perfection of thought which will require much patient conning by the average reader before he gleans its true worth. For this reason, and at the grave risk of doing but imperfect justice to the author, I propose briefly to rehearse the main thesis as simply as I may.

The solution of the marriage problems rests in our ability to realize the significance of marriage—what it really means. Marriage, says Keyserling, is not a natural state, as is infancy or adolescence, not an imposition of destiny as are birth and death. but it is an artistic creation of man's own spirit, a cultural condition which

is the pre-requisite of his spiritual growth.

In marriage which unites two blood streams from an infinite past to transmit them to an infinite future, both parties enter upon not a purely personal adventure, but upon a cosmic contract whose implications are aeonic, immense and over-ruling. Thus it is that law and custom have come to emphasize the social sig-nificance of marrige with the pomp of religious and legal ceremonial. * *

In other words he who marries a wife, marries a world, becomes an initiate in the cosmic order and an actor in the racial drama, and has taken the initial step towards maturity, self-awareness and wisdom. Whether it turn out to be so will depend however on the extent to which both parties are aware of what it is that is taking place between them, whether it seem to them a merely sentimental romance, or whether it be realized for the beautiful and majestic adventure in mutual destiny which it really is.

Not only so but marriage itself while it is a mating is never a merging. Rather it is a state of fixed tension between two poles which never can become identical nor even take the first step toward the invasion of each other's essential unity and solitude. It is part of the tragic beauty of love that you must always be you, I must always be I. But that bi-polar state of tension where it is at all vital and active creates as do two electric nodes, a definite "elliptical field of force," which is the marriage itself, a spiritual entity existing apart from, and above, both parties, and yet dependent upon them for its existence. It is this joint creation which constitutes the value and significance of marriage. It is the soil proper for the growth of the human soul, a "cultural condition" of individual fulfilment.

To this, therefore, the new spiritual home which all unawares they make for themselves, the true substance of which the material home is but the shadow, that husband and wife owe their allegiance, and no longer exclusively to themselves nor to each other. To It, this new and wonderful creation of the spirit of man, they owe the homage of self-discipline and such survice as an artist pays to the work between his hands, all regardless of personal whim or inconvenience or the pettiness of amour propre.

In this view marriage recovers an ancient dignity in a new and more enlightened guise. To Keyserling it certainly is no affair of bath-robe and slippers, no romantic haven of indolent bliss, but an athletic adventure in "mutual destiny" whose object is not happiness per se, but that growth and achievement, without which indeed there can be no happiness worth the name. And if this seem stern

doctrine to silliness, the truth cannot alter its face to suit the immature; and what romance, indeed, of me and thee, can match this spiritual co-partnership in that which transcends the little self of each, the creation of a sphere of growth and unfoldment, wherein "I through thee may be-come more greatly what I am; and Thou through me may likewise become more greatly what thou art."
That is a love compact which illumines the soul with its starry beauty; and turns the little prattle of "I love you, and you love me; and we are going to be happy ever after, into the amusing nonsense of babes.

And if one says, "But what is the practical import of that for work-aday folks?", Keyserling's answer is precise and important. It is suffiday folks?" cient, he says, that having become convinced of truth, you simply submit yourself to its influence; and it, of itself, will evolve in you the creative powers which, without your being aware of their operation, will produce for you in the realm of your personal experience the realities corresponding. Here again we have ancient truth re-stated in precise modern terminology—"Whatsoever a man thinketh in his heart so is it with him." The tragedy of marriage especially in America with its ratio of one divorce to every two marriages, is that lovers seek in wedlock something which is not there. Disappointed and dispirited they sue for divorce, whereas had they known what to look for they would have found something nobler than they had dreamed.

Of the illuminating thesis which Keyserling builds on this foundation there is here no room to speak. "The Book of Marriage" is a book to be studied by the individual for himself, and re-studied until the vision which lies back of its technical sentences is re-born in his own mind. I have here space only to allude to the interesting genesis of this work.

The School of Wisdom, in addition to its regular course of instruction, holds annual sessions, attended by the best minds in Europe for the discussion of world problems. Last year the subject of this new "meeting of the wise men" was "Marriage"; and the results of that discussion are embodied in the present work and wrought into unity by the magnificent editorial introductions of Keyserling himself.

Thus we have here a compilation which has essential unity, the work of experts, such as Havelock Ellis, C. C. Jung, Jacob Wassermann, Thomas Mann, Alfred Adler, Leo Frobenius, Ernest Kretschmer, Sir Rabindranath Tagore, Beatrice M. Hinkle and Baroness Leonie Ungern-Sternberg, swept into harmony by the depth of Keyserling's own thought which will be found to underlie and enhance each part of the whole.

Page Eighteen

FROM MY SEAT IN THE THEATRE

By Elise Dufour

N FRANCE, Germain Berton was acquitted for killing a man mistaken for Leon Daudet; the jury decided that the killing did not constitute murder since there was no intent to kill the victim in question.

While such loose Latin morals offend or amuse us, an examination of the facts makes us realize that the law of Moses never has had any very great reverence even in the United States, and perhaps has less than ever it had; for indeed, murder of every degree thrives with us amaz-

Ingly.

The Illinois farmer may think he reads the Chicago "murder sheet" only because he is indignant. He may fool himself into believing he does not enjoy murders, even when they have become more important to his morning coffee than sugar. Nevertheless murder remains the most popular of all the stimulations offered by the newspapers that print all "the news that's fit to print." Our newspapers have so specialized in this sport that we can enjoy the murders of young children, the mutilation and killing of lovers, etc., as we do sweet music over the radio.

And now at last, the American stage is waking up to the fact that the national predilection for murder has great box-office possibilities. Of course, in the theatre we always have had killings of one kind or another but murder never has been accorded its rightful prominence in the description of daily American life. In the last three months in Hollywood three plays have been presented dealing with murder. At the Wilke's Theatre The American Tragedy ran to crowded houses for many weeks, to be followed by The Noose; while at the Music Box a comedy called Chicago tells the story of Roxie Hart, Chicago's most beautiful murderess.

Chicago, produced in the robust slap-stick style of vaudeville, rather than in the more artistic method of the legitimate stage, is a burlesque that might have been a satire. The play is distinctly clever and gives a fair picture of the way in which murder cases are managed by lawyers, courts and newspapers. A crowded house laughs heartily at the exposure of the hypocrisy of the law.

Nancy Carroll is a murderess good to look at, the kind who says "Don't sob your stuff; play it kid, for all its worth." She is most skillful in making her slender young body expressive of the reactions of the bold modern emotional moron. The play moves fast without a dull moment and the cast is adequate. Clark Gable as the

newspaper reporter gives a flawless performance.

At the conclusion of the play "extra paper" is called. In it is printed an exclusive story by Roxie Hart. The following extract may prove provocative to some hidden sense in the American voter, "Thank God I am free. It has been a grand and glorious adventure, being on trial for the murder of a man. It is the finest educational course any girl could get."

The Noose is a serious play which also moves with good tempo. It is the story of a boy "Nickie" Elkins who does not know the identity of his parents but who has been brought up by Buck Gordon, man of the underworld, now a bootlegger in danger of going to Atlanta. Nickie has fallen in love with a girl above him in station and he wants to elevate himself.

Buck Gordon, afraid of losing so valuable a slave, puts an end to the boy's aspirations by telling him that he is a bastard and that he, Gordon is his father. His mother, having run away when she was eighteen has worked her way up and is now the wife of the governor. Buck calls her his "ace in the hole," and says she will save him from prison. Rather than subject his mother to this, the boy in a quarrel shoots Gordon and the case arouses even more interest than does the ordinary murder because Nickie gives no motive and obviously wants to die.

The play opens in the home of Governor Bancroft. The lawyer and the Governor's wife plead for the youthful killer who is sentenced to hang. No one knows anything about him. William Holden who plays the part of the Governor is a most delightful and skillful actor. The role of the mother could become one of the great parts of the theatre. One wonders what an Emma Dunn or a Haidee Wright would have made of it.

Wright would have made of it.

De Maupassant in "Jean and Pierre" draws the character of a woman in a situation which might suggest finesse to one studying the role of Stella Bancroft. Pauline Crill, however, who plays the part of the Governor's wife cannot be said to show much conception of the conduct of a mother concealed in the person of the Governor's clever and adored wife. She moves without grace or feeling, while opposite her William Holden lives his part and never makes a movement that is not significant.

Stanley Taylor as "Elkins" does some very good restrained work. He is brought before the governor and his wife and hears the woman whom

* *

he alone knows to be his mother begging for his life. The Governor refuses to stay the sentence. The closing of the act is well directed and significant. A moment of tenderness between the husband and wife alone on the stage, a little sentimental crying for a lad who is to be hanged and both exit,—the Governor at the back and his lady at the side.

The Governor closes the door on his exit, but the streamers of Mrs. Governor's gown gleam in the darkness. Audible is the building of the scaffold where the boy is to be hanged in the morning. The streamers disappear and the Governor's wife returns and plies her way rather than walks across the stage. Her movement should be expressive of sudden purpose but it is not.

The boy is not executed because a message comes over the Governor's private wire, in a muffled voice supposed to be his. The message commands that the execution be delayed because the boy's mother is coming to see him. The next morning the executive mansion is naturally thrown into a panic when it is learned that it was a false telephone message to save the boy from hanging. Elkins has given the warden a letter for his mother thinking he is to die, but being reprieved he is frantic to regain it. He is again taken before the Governor and now comes the opportunity for subtle poignant acting between mother and son, but nothing happens.

Whether the Governor's wife reads her son's letter or not is not made apparent. It falls into her hands and is returned unopened to the Governor. The boy is pardoned but must go to prison for a while. Mrs. Governor tells Elkins that he will come to them as soon as he is free. She makes a sentimental speech about a mother's heart and kisses the boy. What a great chance! But in spite of that William Holden in the background is the only reality on the stage.

Pauline Crill is at her best in her speech when she almost convinces her husband that in his confused state of mind he did send that telephone message which saved the boy's life.

The second act of The Noose during which Elkins shoots Gordon is finely conceived and well played. Conspicuous in ease and in dramatic ability are William Gould playing "Come-on Conly" and Walter C. Percival playing "Buck Gordon." Ruth Renick is more than adequate even if she does at times step out of her part. Her best work is, of course, the pathetic bit when she asks the

Governor for Elkin's body.

The play is improbable but that is never important. It has a little propaganda against prohibition but that is not long enough to be tiresome. "The Noose" is entertaining, sustaining the interest until the end and it can boast of at least three actors of the first rank.

The Firebrand, by Edwin Justice Mayer, presents also the pleasures of murder, but in the romatic spirit and in the distant haze of the golden days of Florence. A paradox begins the comedy, that of charming, swaggering Ian Keith impersonating the robust artist Benvenuto Cellini. Though the play has no Florentine quality, the voices being strongly flavored by the great open spaces of America, the performance overcomes such details, rocking an enthusiastic audience in

Apparent is the sure touch of Frank Reicher revealed in the lightness of tempo, the artistic covering of the stage, in that subtle aliveness that the artist-director alone knows how to draw out of his players.

Some authorities consider it unfortunate to open a play, particularly a comedy, with a dialogue between minor characters. If the hero must have his way prepared, a group will start the bail rolling more briskly than can the love-making of obscure actors. It is gratifying and exacting to have the theatre crowded with old friends who are ecstatic over seeing an actor in red tights, but it makes his first entrance difficult if he has more than doublet and hose to bring to his part, and Ian Keith has.

Leaning against the door, his slim red length punctuated by his expressive face, he was as arresting as was the gleeful applause of a crowded house, largely sprinkled with movie

stars and directors.

Benvenuto appears fresh from sporting with the gentle art of murder. But this time the Duke Allisandro De Medici, no doubt jealous of his subject's pleasures, is hot on his heels. Though Cellini, like the modern killer, has no taste for paying the penalty of such revels and is perturbed by the possibility that he may be forced to do so, yet he has time for love. His love-making, though set in the sixteenth century is quite modern, a brand particularly well known about Hollywood. Of course, today, one must dress love up in romantic terms, especially if one has anything to do with movies. That's imperative. Cellini's love is unmasked and the auditional and the audi dience greatly enjoys this frankness about fundamentals.
It is like this: Cellini buys his

It is like this: Cellini buys his sweetheart, but wriggles out of the payment of the ducats. He is not concerned with anything inside of his adored one,—ideas, morals, inner beauty, but with externals, such as hair, eyes and form,-in short, the

artist Cellini chooses for his sweetheart that most popular type that the Southern negro so aptly calls "a walk-off." This is a much more elegant expression than that of "dumbell."

The negro explained his expression thus: "When Gawd made de people he made dem out of de clay down by de rivah and stood dem up by de wall to dry. But befo' he could put de brains in some of dem, dey jus' done walk off." Elsie Bartlett played well the part of a young walk-off with an American accent.

William Farnum as De Medici was altogether delightful, never slipping out of his part and having a deliciously light and sprightly touch. He re-vealed how little man has changed since the old Florentine days: that even the boldest quails when it comes to his relationship with a wife who can say with authority, "You thought I was the Duchess, I am the Duke." Ethel Clayton does not put this over. Perhaps she has done too much silent work on the screen; for the sort of woman she is supposed to portray always possesses an arresting and very clear voice.

The first act went a little too heavily in the manner of melodrama rather than of comedy. But perhaps that was because the audience did so much acting that the stage could not get an even chance. But the second act clicked mirthfully and was alto-

gether successful.

The Duke has carried away the walk-off Angela to the summer palace where his wife has unexpectedly arrived bringing with her Cellini, com-manded by the Duke to stay in his own house until De Medici gets around to hanging him. The Duke is nervously enthusiastic about Angela. Cellini indulges in another murder, after which he scales the balcony of the Duchess and with his arms about her amusingly keeps his ear cocked for his pursuers. For is not self-preservation stronger than love?

sides, he does not love the Duchess, but Angela, who at this moment is in the Duke's bedroom which is adjacent to that of the Duchess. The wife, who is "the Duke" goes to investigate her husband's state of sleepiness before leading her lover into the darkness of her chamber. Cellini waits uneasily, listening for the approach of the soldiers who are whipping the bushes for him. The Duke's window opens and he and Angela emerge. Cellini hides. With well-acted comedy the husband hears the Duchess knocking and shutting Angela out on the balcony goes into his room to disarm suspicion—a very modern play, you see!

Cellini abducts the "walk-off" and in the last act after having spent a blissful night with Angela disillusionment sets in according to the general pattern. He narrowly escapes hanging by using his wits and by again deceiving the Duchess into thinking he is her lover. He bestowes Angela upon the graceful Duke who takes her away. The play ends satisfactorily by the coming of a little page to give Cellini again the key to the bedroom of the Duchess.

Dickson Morgan is to be congratulated on the effectiveness of his set-

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YOUTHFUL CRITIC

(Continued from page fourteen)

thing which turned me against it most strongly was the set of would-be wise-cracking titles. The whole thing was silly enough without injecting a terrible titling job. As we came after it had started, we didn't see who wrote the titles; but if he is wise, he will go away and hide for awhile. Whoever wrote them never heard the wrotestime "Provider in the soul of with" quotation, "Brevity is the soul of wit." They were so long and involved that it was impossible to understand what was meant to be the humor. The story was as old as it very well could be and was boring in the extreme. The cast was rather poor, probably because it showed very little interest in what it was doing. Virginia Lee Corbin gray the best performance of the bin gave the best performance of the whole bunch, but one scene where she and Ben Lyon were kissing each other almost made me sick. Pictures like The Perfect Sap are the ones which drive people from the theatres.

THE BRUTE

As I look over my proofs of this number, I find that I have not given credit to all those who made contributions to the excellence of The Brute, reviewed elsewhere. Harvey Gates made a very fine adaptation of the novel of the same name by Douglas Newton, and Jack Jarmuths wrote the titles, which must have been good, for I don't remember anything about them, as should be the case with about them, as should be the case with all titles. However, I remember that they were punctuated badly, as is the case with all Warner titles.

OLD TIMERS ALL RIGHT
The Los Angeles Times has a page story stating that the day of the young director is at hand, and cites W. K. Howard, William Wellman and Paul Sloane, among others. Consistent with the asinine manner in which producers run things, there probably will be a tendency to give a director

GRAHAM BAKER whose

"WHITE FLANNELS" even The Spectator admits

is good, has finished

"IRISH HEARTS"

and is now picturizing

"THE HEART OF MARYLAND"

at

Warner Brothers

an important picture solely because he is young. I can't quite see wherein directing differs from any other pursuit in life in that experience is necessary to make a success of it. The young directors are interesting be-cause of the promise they hold. They will have a decided influence on the future of the screen, but its present is much safer in the hands of the best of the old, experienced men who almost know what it is all about. There are some things in life that we can learn only by experience and they are among the things that a director should know.

A title in The Yankee Clipper draws attention to "clashing colors" in a street scene in a Chinese city. The scene is shot in black and white. Until such scenes are presented in colors it would seem to be the better part of wisdom not to draw attention to the colors that are in them. Mentioning colors in a title and showing the scenes without them is somewhat ab-

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No. 8

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HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JUNE 11, 1927

Cecil de Mille and "The King of Kings"

THE supreme theme has been used. Jesus has come to the screen and De Mille has given us a picture which will tend to standardize the world's conception of the New Testament. It was a great thing that Cecil de Mille conceived and executed-something that will live for a long, long time and which will gross more money than any other picture ever made. De Mille has one of the best business minds in pictures and making The King of Kings was the most brilliant stroke of his successful business career. He has made a picture that the public will buy for the next score of years, and has given the world something that supplements magnificently its most widely read book. He has given the screen a new dignity, thus being of infinite service to it. The business of the screen being to sell art, De Mille has become its supreme salesman by producing art that all the world will buy. He has loomed large in the history of motion pictures, but this picture will bring to him imperishable fame. Not only has he dealt impressively with an impressive theme, but he has given us a new conception of the possibilities of the motion picture camera to paint pictures of surpassing beauty. The King of Kings certainly is a thing of beauty, of great and glorious beauty that is a monument to the artistic sense of its creator. From every standpoint it is the most important picture ever made. It will add enormously to the already established patronage of pictures by attracting to theatres millions of people who have been holding aloof. That is one of the services De Mille has performed for the screen. All honor to him for his supreme achievement. I never have written for The Spectator anything more sincere than this tribute to De Mille's genius. It is astonishing that he has merited it by giving the screen its most tiresome picture. I have viewed it twice. The first time it bored

me, but I blamed myself, not it. I went to it a second time with my mind made up that I would see merit in it that had escaped me the first time. I never approached a picture more sympathetically, with a greater determination to enjoy it. I so informed Cecil de Mille before the screening began at the opening of the Chinese Theatre, and I hope he felt that I was sincere. But again I was bored. We had a party of nine people at the opening and eight of them thought The King of Kings very tiresome indeed. I have such respect for Mr. de Mille's business astuteness that I am prepared to believe that he assumed that we would be bored, but did not lose sight of the fact that the world would pay to see his picture even though it applauded it with its yawns. The man who entertained us with the engrossing drama of The Volga Boatman knows that the story's the thing, yet went about giving us a picture without a story simply because he had a saleable theme. Only a foolish person would have done otherwise. De Mille visualized his picture and filmed it magnificently as he saw it. He was absolutely honest about it and gave the public all that could be crowded within his conception of a picture about Christ. If that conception was inspired by business consideration or artistic emotions I have no way of knowing. But I know the outcome-that the simplest man in all history made this screen appearance in a picture devoid of simplicity. Great scenes pile upon one another until the eye tires and the brain refuses to absorb them. Fourteen reels without a connected and dramatic story running all through them are too many. De Mille made an heroic attempt to crowd into one picture enough about Jesus to make a half dozen pictures. Instead of six entertaining films we get one that tires us.

IN APPRECIATION

Oh, we labor and we worry and we have to pay our bills; We are cogs within a system, we are grist within the mills, And we're ground beneath the pressure of divers petty

But, thank God for our producers and our motion picture shows!

For when we're razzled, fagged and dazzled and our nerves are frazzled bare,

Then—oh, the gracious solace of a wide and cushioned chair,

Where we can loll in comfort—no other place to go— Oh—believe us—we are grateful for the motion picture show!

When friends drop in to see us, for whose bent of conversation

We feel a lack of interest or a strong disinclination; When we've social obligations that we feel we must perform;

Or when the day is chilly, or when the day's too warm; Or when we're merely weary and want to rest and doze— Oh then, how grateful are we for the motion picture shows!

Oh, the show's an institution that we ill could do without; Its diversified conceptions resolve our minds from doubt Of manners, styles and customs from Cairo to Nome, Or the same, in their relation to our own dear native home;

It panders to emotions with a thousand varied wiles; It wakes the shade of Sadness, or the joyous elf of Smiles. Oh, it saddens and it gladdens in 'most every way we know, But it's chiefest claim to favor is—just as a place to go. Page Four

Lack of Story Is Chief Weakness

HE opening sequence of The King of Kings is a gorgeous one in color, whose contribution to the story is the planting of the fact that Mary Magdalene was a courtesan, something, by the way, that is established in a title that introduces the sequence. Later in the picture the woman taken in adultery is thrust before us without notice. No elaborate sequence is introduced to establish her status. Mary's presence in the picture is to give an opportunity to depict Jesus performing the miracle of casting out of her the seven deadly sins; the other is there to offer an excuse for showing the scene of "casting the first stone." Therefore the two women have equal story value, yet one is introduced in a gorgeous sequence and the other without any ceremony. Mr. de Mille no doubt will defend this with the argument that the opening sequence is a glittering one that has great production value, that it was included for its pictorial merit. I quite agree with him, and compliment him upon the magnificence of it, but offer it as an excuse for accepting The King of Kings simply as a motion picture and viewing it as such. Granting that its theme will make it successful, let us dismiss the box office considerations from our minds and treat it solely as a screen production. It has the one major fault of being devoid of any story value. A son was born to a carpenter of Nazareth; he became a teacher and his teachings have influenced mankind more than those of any other person in all history. Although more than nineteen centuries have elapsed since the baby was born in Nazareth, those who are influenced by his teachings feel his presence to-day as potently as did his contemporaries who heard his voice. There is a dramatic story for you, the most dramatic in all history. There was merit in the teachings of Christ-as there was merit in the teachings of Confucius who gave the world its greatest code of ethics; as there is merit in any teachings that are good-and those who followed Christ sought to continue his work by spreading his gospel. It was at a time when the mind of the world was primitive, and to make it more susceptible to the wise teachings, Christ was credited with divine origin and a power to perform miracles. To put it in modern language, the followers of Christ displayed good showmanship in selling him to the world. We know that such a man existed and that his teachings have been of great good to humanity. We know also that no man ever existed who possessed the power to perform the miracles credited to Christ. To ask us to believe that there was on earth nineteen hundred years ago a man who could raise people from the dead, that never previously nor since, has there been another, is to invite us to quarrel with our own senses. We are interested in Christ for the things he did, not for those he could not do. But De Mille does not show him as the great teacher; he does not feed our intellects upon reason. He gravely and reverently presents his Christ to us as a performer of deeds our minds reject as impossibilities, and shows us nothing of the intensely dramatic development of the lowly boy into the world's first personage. He builds to no point. He merely illustrates-gloriously, I'll admit-episodes that could not have happened and ignores those that must have. He has trampled all over a field in which other producers might have trespassed in

search of fodder. He presents the story of Judas inadequately, but spoils it for anyone else. He makes the crucifixion one of the sequences in his picture and removes it from the list of great themes that might have pictures of their own. It was a rare pasture he entered, but he fed so greedily in it that our reaction to his gluttony is mental indigestion.

Picture Is Lacking in Emotional Appeal

HE King of Kings appealed to me neither emotionally nor intellectually. Only my sense of beauty was satisfied, and that only until it became surfeited. I did not like the first half because it was so unlike a motion picture, and disliked the second half because it was so like one. I am aware that De Mille made the picture with his eyes open and that he knew just why each scene is in it. But I can not fathom his reasoning. He knows why he did not confine himself to one miracle and build up to it, but I don't. In The Miracle Man, a picture without any of the glamour of this De Mille opus, we have one of the most moving scenes in screen history when Frankie Lee throws down his crutches and finds his legs strong and straight beneath him. In The King of Kings someone we do not know, someone for whom no sympathy is developed, throws away his crutches and we yawn and wonder when under the sun the miracles are going to end and the picture begin. The tribulations of Jesus failed to move me for he was not presented in a way that gained my sympathy. He was shown doing one thing after another that my reason rejected as being things that no man ever has been able to do. Taking him out of the ordinary human class to which he belonged put him outside the bounds of the sympathy that I ever am ready to extend to human beings. My heart can follow only where my mind leads. I am aware that the picture appeals powerfully to some people, and even if I could, I have no desire to change the minds of those who think it great, but to me it is devoid of all those things I look for in a motion picture except production, and that offends, for the story of the world's simplest man should have been told in the screen's simplest picture, not with the flambouyant imaginings of a De Mille. True, the producer reached far afield for his authorities and can plead that the records of past centuries yielded him his material. If I had not been tired by the time it was reached, undoubtedly the crucifixion would have stirred me more than it did. I read somewhere that De Mille followed both Dore and Rubens in picturing it. I do not understand how the works of two such widely different artists could be blended to make a perfect creation. I could see nothing of Rubens in the screen scenes of the three crosses, but much of Dore. I think a greater artist could have been followed, for Dore, while a great draughtsman, was by no means a master of artistic composition. I wish the De Mille research department had discovered a copy of Ruben's "Christ on the Cross," which hangs in the old Pinacothek in Munich, where I saw it. Peculiarly enough. it is technically one of the poorest works of the great master, but the conception absorbs all its faults of execution. When I viewed it I forgot paint, line, and texture, and looked upon only the stark horror of the dead Christ hanging there alone in the night against the black backJune 11, 1927 Page Five

ground of the sky that reached to the indistinct Jerusalem in the distance. The strength of death, its finality, the magnitude of the tragedy, the awfulness of the crime that the then civilization committed against the civilization that was to come, came to me with overwhelming force. Dore, whom De Mille copied, never conceived anything so great, nor do I know of anything else that Rubens has done that was half so tremendous. In the scene showing the raising of Lazarus De Mille seems to have given us his own conception. I can find no authority for the presence of a crowd at the entrance to the cave. Rembrandt painted the scene, and his conception of it probably is regarded as the authentic one. At least, lacking a better authority, we have no right to disregard him. In his painting there is only the family group. He shows Lazarus wearing a beard, but De Mille shows Kenneth Thompson without one. Judas also is beardless in the picture, yet I know of no instance in which he has been painted without one.

Last Supper Is Done Inadequately

IFTEEN or sixteen years ago Kalem produced The of eight people seated at my dinner table the other evening remembered this picture distinctly, John Barrymore, my brother, (K. C. B.) and myself. None of the trio is religious, using the word in its narrow sense, consequently the picture could not have lingered in our memories on account of its theme. We remembered it, we agreed, on account of its great simplicity, its intensely human quality. We could not remember who played Christ, or who directed it, or such details; but we remembered that Christ was presented as a human being who had appeal. This old picture showed the birth of Christ in the stable, a beautiful sequence, as I remember it, with the Three Wise Men and a real star, for the whole picture was shot in the Holy Land. The Last Supper copied Da Vinci more closely than De Mille did, and the crucifixion was depicted in a manner that proved immeasurably more effective than the similar scenes in King of Kings. The procession to Calvary had appeal because it was shown in long shots. De Mille handles it in a cheap, blatant, movie way. The spectacle of the husky Bill Boyd having a fearful struggle to bear a load that the frailer Harry Warner had struggled under apparently for miles, impressed me as an absurd and a totally wasted attempt to create sympathy. In the De Mille picture the procession could have been made dramatic if it had been shown in a long shot, with Christ bearing his cross with a mixture of pride and patience, as he did in the old Kalem picture. The Kalem people felt the picture more than De Mille felt his, for over a lapse of fifteen years I still can feel the spirit that the former made the screen reflect, while anything I received from The King of Kings wore off before I left the theatre. When I stood in the refectory in the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie at Milan and studied the composition of Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper, it was not with the purpose of storing in my mind impressions of the grouping with which I could, some years later, confound Cecil de Mille; nor was it with such in-- tention that I viewed the finest copy of that picture in existence, that painted by Da Vinci's pupil, Marco d'

Oggiono, and which hangs in the Diploma Gallery of the Royal Academy, London; consequently I can not recall all the fine points of this great painting sufficiently to estimate the liberties De Mille took with it, but from the original and its greatest copy, and also from the very fine copy in the Louvre, Paris, I gained something that De Mille utterly failed to put on the screen. His handling of the Last Supper sequence deprives him of the right to be credited with the production of a truly great work of art. He gave it movie treatment of the cheapest kind at a time when he might have done something notable. I do not know what warrant he had for placing Judas, in his picture merely a screen actor and not a type, on the left hand of Jesus, or by what right he sought to improve the grouping of Da Vinci. Any director who could have brought to life the amazingly expressive hands of the disciples as painted by Da Vinci, would be entitled to a niche in the hall of fame if he achieved nothing else in his entire career. It is by the number of neglected opportunities that The King of Kings reveals, that the conclusion is forced upon us that the picture in its entirety is but an indifferent realization of a magnificent chance. It is a film whose every sequence should reflect greatness, but none does. Only as a product of a commercial mind is it a brilliant success.

The Real Jesus and H. B. Warner

T. B. WARNER'S characterization of Jesus plumbed no depths in me. I do not blame him for it. He portrays magnificently the kind of characterization that the studio conceived for the part, but he is not my Christ. I can not believe that a man with so little animation could make his voice heard down the ages. I felt that there should have been some message from the actor's soul to mine, that he should have stirred me as Warner did in Silence, as Janet Gaynor does in Seventh Heaven, as Jean Hersholt does in Old Heidelberg. But I received no such message, and was a placid and unmoved spectator of Christ's suffering. I was disappointed with the temple sequence, for every picture depicting it shows Jesus in great wrath, but in the screen version he shows but little emotion. The generally accepted conception of the appearance of Christ is that his hair was long. Da Vinci, Correggio, Titian, Raphael, Rembrandt, and the less famous Durer, Reni, and Matsys—surely an imposing list of authorities—depict him with hair much longer than Warner wore his. But I will give you a pen portrait of Jesus written by one who saw him. Expert antiquarians pronounce the letters of Publius Lentulus to be genuine. He was Roman pro-consul in Palestine and knew Jesus in Nazareth. For centuries his letters were forgotten, except by students of Latin. A Roman professor a few years ago translated them into modern Italian, and an English translation has been made of them. One will interest those who have seen the picture, for as Christ is the greatest character ever brought to the screen it follows that his characterization is the one with which the least liberties may be taken. "There has appeared here a man of strange virtue," Publius Lentulus wrote. "His disciples call him 'The Son of God.' He cures the sick and raises the dead to life. He is a very handsome man and worthy of all our attention. His hair is blond and covers his

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shoulders in separate curls and is parted in the middle, after the fashion of the people of Nazareth. His forehead is smooth and serene, without marks or wrinkles; his countenance is pink; his nose is well formed; his beard, of the same color as his hair, is parted in the middle. In his gaze is an expression of wisdom and of openness; his eyes are blue, but shine terribly when he reproves people; but in conversation they are amiable. His observations are expressed with liveliness, although he always remains calm. Nobody has ever seen him laugh; but he often weeps. Of a good height and straight figure he has very beautiful hands and arms. His manner of speaking is serious. He speaks but little, and is modest. In short, he is as handsome as a man may be. They call him Jesus, the Son of Mary." In some respects Warner fits this picture, but his eyes did not "shine terribly" in any scene, not even in the temple scene when he was supposed to be in great wrath. When De Mille took Christ out of the pages of the Bible and showed him to us as a human being he should have gone all the way and shown him as really human.

Fine Performances Mark the Picture

THE excellence of the performances is the outstanding feature of The King of Kings. It was a stroke of genius for De Mille to assemble for his great picture the greatest cast ever assembled for one production. There is not a single sequence that is not acted admirably. One of the finest performances, in my estimation, is that of Ernest Torrence. He makes Peter a lovable character, even though he denies his leader to save his own skin. The part calls for a considerable range of acting and Torrence is equal to all its demands. The Caiaphas of Rudolph Schildkraut is another notable performance, and Sam de Grasse, as the Pharisee, makes a big contribution to the wealth of fine acting in the picture. M. Moore, as the boy Mark, gives a performance that measures up to those of the old and experienced troupers. He has a charming, boyish personality. I have no fault to find with the manner in which Joseph Schildkraut plays Judas, but the obvious desire of the producer to keep him in the picture, by cutting him in when there was no occasion for it, finally made me tire of seeing him. Judas ceased to be of importance to the picture as soon as he had betrayed Christ, but even the great crucifixion sequence was interrupted several times to acquaint us with the misery of Judas, which had no story value. It was bad editing. The disciples who riveted my attention more than the others were Robert Edeson and James Neill, both of whom give fine performances. But to mention individually all those who make valuable contributions to the picture would occupy too much space. De Mille stuck closely to motion picture traditions by giving us none but beautiful women. It would have been a relief, and certainly would have made some of the scenes more convincing, if more of the faces had had more character and less beauty. I presume that when the picture is cut down the first thing eliminated will be the "comedy relief" scene showing the Roman soldiers catching the fish that yields no gold coin. It is silly. They are shown casting their lines in the hope that they will be rewarded as Peter was; we know they will not, and the rest should be left to our

imagination. There are several scenes in which the Pharisee is shown with Christ, but at the time of the betrayal Judas tells the Pharisee that the man he kisses will be Christ. This is in answer to the Pharisee's query as to the signal Judas will give to show which is Christ. As the Pharisee already was acquainted with the man Judas was about to betray I can not see why such titles are included in the sequence. The opening sequence reveals to what a high degree of perfection Technicolor has developed color photography. The whole picture should have been shot in color. It would have made it even more dignified and impressive. Probably the argument will be advanced that fourteen reels in natural color would tire the eye. As the motion picture screen is the only place where we always see only variations of black and white, all other objects that our eyes behold during our waking hours being various shades of color, I do not see how such argument is tenable. Supporting such reasoning is the result of an exhaustive series of experiments that Douglas Fairbanks conducted when considering natural colors for The Black Pirate. He discovered that colored film caused less retinal fatigue than black and white. If all of The King of Kings had been shown in natural colors it would have been a creation of such exquisite beauty that it would have been its own apology for its lack of entertainment.

Lindbergh's Flight Has a Lesson in It

YOUNG man with an ability to impress people into taking a chance on him, buys an inexpensive airplane in San Diego and flies in it to St. Louis and thence to New York. He is just an ordinary young fellow whose father is dead and whose mother teaches school. He never in all his life had done anything to attract the attention of anyone whose interest in him had not been the outgrowth of personal contact. No man has achieved anything until he is known beyond the circle of his acquaintances. Such a one was this young fellow. In quite a matter-of-fact way he announced that he was going to fly alone to Paris, and the world began to murmur the name of Charles Lindbergh. One morning Charles asked his engineer how everything was and was told that nothing needed attention. "Well, I might as well go," he said. "So long." He headed for Paris and arrived there, and when his mother learned of it she said, "I hope they'll let him go right to sleep." Nothing else in all history has thrilled the world in just the same way as the exploit of this quite ordinary young man has. The absolute simplicity of it is the secret of the thrill. "Well, I might as well go"-"I hope they'll let him go right to sleep," were as much parts of the whole drama as the droning of the engine above the trackless Atlantic. Only a perfect production could thrill the world as this one has. It gained an effect that every motion picture producer endeavors to achieve every time he makes a motion picture, but which none ever succeeded in doing. In fact, he could have proven to you in advance that the Lindbergh flight would be an awful flop from an entertainment standpoint. The story was not motivated, he would have said. It should have opened with the poor teacher about to lose her home through the foreclosure of a mortgage on it. This would have made the whole thing reasonable. And

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the titles! Ye gods, the titles! Imagine a screen scene showing a man about to fly to Paris saying, "Well, I might as well go." There is not a motion picture executive in Hollywood who would have permitted such a title. The mother, of course, is an impossible character. The part she played is not at all natural. A title writer who submitted, "I hope they let him go right to sleep," would have been thrown off the lot. A real mother, when informed that her son had performed such an astonishing feat, would have drawn herself up with great dignity and would have said, "Tis pleasing news, but only what I expected. A mother's heart beat with the engine's; the winds carried a mother's prayers to her boy." No producer would have permitted such a great story to be told so simply. The unfortunate feature of it is that the industry will not profit from the lesson the Lindbergh flight might teach it. Most of the executives who control production will think I have taken leave of my senses when I suggest that the flight has a message for pictures. They will be unable to see the connection. The picture business is one which prospers according to the degree in which it can manufacture thrills, either intellectual, emotional or physical, yet it lacks the mentality to analyze a thrill that is produced by some agency other than its own. Lindbergh manufactures a thrill unequalled by any other in all history and it enthralls the world because of its absolute simplicity, but motion pictures attempt to achieve the same end by avoiding any semblance of simplicity. When on the screen a man reaches for his hat and stick he must be shown in a hall imposing enough for the lyingin-state of a dead emperor. The screen as a whole is unreal, expensively cheap, and vulgar. The exceptions, like Seventh Heaven, are its successes. The public must turn to 'real life for its supreme thrills because motion picture producers have not mastered the art of depicting real life on the screen, nor will they permit freedom in doing it to those who can.

"Aftermath" Full of Human Beings

FTERMATH as a motion picture has many weaknesses. As a production it is vastly interesting. It proves so many things. The most important is the wisdom of putting real people on the screen. There are several sequences in it that have no story value, but they are interesting because our interest has been created in the people in them. Some definite characterization has been given to every person on the screen. The servants have personality as definitely registered as that of the leading characters. We do not make pictures that way over here. When we want a man to play a butler we call for a "butler type" despite the fact that there is no such thing in the world outside the screen. The screen has standardized butlers until all of them look alike and act alike, although the butlers in the homes of screen people differ as widely as bank presidents or brick layers. In American pictures only two or three of the leading characters are given definite personalities. All the rest are "types". I was interested in every foot of Aftermath because I was permitted to become acquainted with everyone in it. It is devoid of "types". We get only a short flash of a chauffeur, but while he is on the screen we see him knock the ashes out of his pipe before entering a

house. That very brief action helped to strengthen the impression that I was looking at the doings of real people. In the picture there are dozens of such touches, little as to footage, but big as contributions to the sincerity of the production. In a banquet scene a man seeks to replenish his glass. He picks up a bottle, finds it light, puts it down and picks up another from which he fills his glass. In an American picture he would pick up the right bottle the first time. We make our pictures according to mechanical laws; Aftermath takes into account the fact that human actions are not mechanical, consequently its individual scenes are much more convincing than those we find in the ordinary run of American pictures. The German director took into account that the wine drinker could not know which of the two dark bottles in front of him contained wine and that he was liable to pick up the empty one first. Most of our directors would be inclined to shoot the scene over again if the actor picked up the wrong bottle. It would have disturbed his tempo. Aftermath was directed by Erich Waschneck. I hope he does. It is important that he should if he wears the kind of wide-open shirts that our directors fancy. Having selected that one out of the one hundred and four wheezes that the name suggested to me, I will proceed to say that if his story-telling ability equalled his care for detail he would have given as a remarkable picture. The whole production gives the impression that no one directed it. that real people are being photographed doing real things, The director had excellent actors in all the parts and I am confident that he contented himself with giving them a thorough understanding of the scenes and then allowing them to play them without mechanical direction. All direction should be done that way when real actors are in the scenes, which is not often. There is a girl in Aftermath who looks astonishingly like a younger Pola Negri. Many of her poses are captivating. I refuse to believe that they were due to direction. I am satisfied that she lost herself in the part and that her subconscious mind ruled her actions. In no other way could such sincerity have been shown, such naturalness and freedom from histrionics. Every supervisor and director in Hollywood should see this picture and study the manner in which the people in it are shown as being so wholly and completely human.

"Aftermath" Story Rather Wandering

FTERMATH was made primarily for Central European audiences. One can not criticize it with full sympathy until he knows how it has fulfilled its primary mission. And to know that, he must know Central European audiences, something about which I am ignorant. I have not attended many cinemas in Europe, not being concerned with pictures on my visits there, and the only films I saw were American, Charlie Chaplin and Bill Hart being the stars I encountered most often. If Aftermath pleases European audiences it is a success as a production, and that fact is to be taken into account when estimating its worth. As a sample of German screen technic it emphasizes the already established fact that the Germans are good technicians, but poor story-tellers. This one wanders all over the place and embraces people who have nothing to do with it. The thread of it, however, can be followed readily until near the end when it

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becomes somewhat difficult to determine what we are supposed to be interested in. It has a most fascinating girl who plays opposite a rather colorless juvenile, and the romance between them, planted at the opening, comes into the picture at intervals without drama and without complications. There is another romance between the boy's mother and the governor of the district, both parts which are played excellently, and to me this is the major love interest in the film. That a love affair between two young people is not essential to a picture, something that everyone except a producer knows, is demonstrated in Aftermath. It also is demonstrated that foreigners can make pictures devoid of those camera angles that we have grown to look for in them. There is not a weird shot in this picture, but there are plenty of beautiful ones, reflecting good photography and intelligent lighting. It is not fair to attribute to Alfred Hustwick, who edited and titled the picture for the American screen, the story weaknesses of Aftermath. He had a tough job on his hands. He was handed a positive print and had no excess film to work with. He had to use the original fade-ins and fade-outs as he found them, and was circumscribed in other ways. He had to rely largely on titles to tell the story, and he wrote excellent ones. He presumed that the characters were speaking colloquially in their own language, thus he used American colloquialisms in translating their speeches. He would have been at fault if he had made an effort to preserve a European atmosphere in the wording of the titles. Aftermath is the first of a series of foreign-made pictures to be imported for screening in this country. Walter W. Kofeldt has undertaken to supply American audiences with the best European productions, and it is to be hoped that the success that will crown his initial efforts will be of sufficient magnitude to warrant the continuance of the importations. Everyone engaged in picture-making in Hollywood owes it to himself to view the pictures made elsewhere. Even those who do not consider Aftermath superior screen entertainment can not fail to derive some benefit from viewing it. I found it quite entertaining and will look forward to the others that Mr. Kofeldt will show us. It will do none of us any harm to know that there are people in other countries besides our own who know something about motion pictures.

Mary Philbin Does Well in "Surrender"

7HEN they were about to begin on Lea Lyon out at Universal I remember the papers saying that they could not make up their minds whether to cast Lya de Putti or Mary Philbin in the name part. I could not figure out how two girls who differ so greatly one from the other could be considered for the same part. I have seen the picture, now called Surrender, and quite approve the final decision to let Mary Philbin play Lea. The part calls for a spiritual quality which Mary possesses and which no characterization in which I yet have seen Miss de Putti indicated that she possessed. Under Edward Sloman's direction Mary gives the most satisfactory performance that stands to her credit since she registered her inaugural hit in Merry-Go-'Round. Her forte is heavy drama or tragedy, and she never is convincing when she gets far away from either. Ivan Mosjukine, the Russian who played the lead in Strogoff, plays

opposite Mary in Surrender. I like his acting. The European tendency towards heroics is missing from his mannerisms, and he plays his part with sincerity and conviction. He impresses me as being a valuable addition to our ranks of actors. One performance in Surrender that greatly pleases me is that of Nigel de Brulier. It pleases me not only because it is a splendid characterization of a Jewish Rabbi, but because it presents a good opportunity to a fine old trouper to demonstrate to the young people of the screen just what acting is. We have many fine actors in Hollywood and I always am glad to find one of them in a role that gives him a chance to display his art. De Brulier's performance in Surrender is one of the features of the production. The direction of Ted Sloman is an example of what can be produced by sticking to motion picture conventions. I can find fault with no individual scene. The production is an elaborate one and mechanically the picture is perfect. Each scene is presented as we have grown used to expecting it to be. The book is a powerful presentation of the persecution of the Jews in Galicia, and Edward Montagne and Sloman made a satisfactory screen story out of it, but they stuck to accepted screen traditions. The picture seems to lack a soul. I have tried to fathom its weakness, but have not been successful. It has one big dramatic punch, the drama being sustained throughout a long sequence that is directed splendidly. Lea goes to a Russian prince. The sacrifice of her purity is the ransom price for the lives of her townspeople. It is a powerful situation and its transition into a love scene between the two is natural and compelling. It is the only part of the picture that stirred my emotions. The story is one that should have had a strong appeal, and the number of tears that I have shed in projection rooms prove that audiences and music are not necessary to awaken emotional reaction in me, but at no time during the unfolding of this picture in the Universal projection room did its inherent pathos move me. The constant irritation of poor punctuation in the titles may have had something to do with it. I was conscious, however, that I was looking at some fine photography for which Gilbert Warrenton was responsible and which made the picture an artistic delight. There were many notable examples of grouping and lighting which resulted in pictures with a Rembrandt quality. Surrender was produced under the supervision of Paul Kohner. It is a good picture, but might have been a great one.

On the Importance of the Little Things

OVERS is the kind of picture that you see quite often on the screen. There is no excuse for its being as poor as it is. It has everything. The theme is a strong one—gossip forcing the wife of one man into the arms of another. The screen story of Douglas Furber and Sylvia Thalberg developes the theme in an entirely satisfactory manner. The production is a sumptuous one, every reel presenting a series of beautiful pictures. The cast is particularly strong. Ramon Novarro, Alice Terry and Edward Martindel play the leading parts, and the minor roles are in the hands of such very fine actors as Edward Connelly, John Miljan, Holmes Herbert, George K. Arthur and Roy d' Arcy. Story, production and cast are the big things that enter into a picture. All of them

being entirely satisfactory in Lovers we can not blame its lack of merit on their absence. This brings us to the conclusion that the picture's weakness may be attributed to the manner in which the little things were handled. Anything that harms a picture, however, can not be a little thing, which brings us to another conclusion fraught with importance to the makers of motion pictures—that there is no such thing as a little thing in any picture. Everything is big. One so-called little thing in a picture will weaken it but slightly; a lot of such things will ruin it. They ruined Lovers. People have laughed at me because of my persistency in advocating the proper punctuation of titles, the laughers protesting that it is such a small thing to occupy so much space. One man writes me a kidding letter about the importance I attached to Ray Hatton wearing his hat in a woman's boudoir; another asks me to forget close-ups and take up something of more importance. One example of one of these little things in a picture would not harm it greatly, but put all of them in one picture, and repeat them with aggravating persistency, and they offset all the virtue of story, cast and production. The utmost ignorance is reflected in punctuation of the titles in Lovers, and there are scores of idiotic close-ups. There is no snap in the telling of the story, the characters dragging their way through it with a lassitude that becomes annoying to view. I believe this is the first John Stahl picture I have reviewed since I began The Spectator, and can not recall anything else of his that I have seen, but am convinced that his reputation is based on better work than he shows in Lovers. Apparently to his direction and the editing is attributable the weakness of the picture. Many scenes that would have been quite dramatic if shown in shots comprehensive enough to include all the characters enacting them were chopped into close-ups that destroyed the unity of the groups, the unity being the dramatic factors that were the excuses for the scenes. But the picture is not entirely without virtue. Far from it. Miss Terry, Novarro, and Martindel give excellent performances. I do not fancy male pulchritude to an extent that influences my estimate of the acting of those who possess it, but I must confess that I derive considerable pleasure from merely looking at Novarro. He certainly is a handsome youngster, but his looks are not his only asset. He can act. He does very well in Lovers, but wait until you see him in Old Heidelberg. I might say something about the looks of my old friend Ed Martindel, but I do not wish to make him vain. He has reached the dangerous age, and you never can tell how dangerously vanity might express itself. But he, too, can act. I would like to see him on

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GRanite 6346 6713 Sunset Boulevard Hollywood, Calif. the screen much oftener. Many scenes in Lovers are directed effectively, but not enough of them to make it a good picture.

Louis Wolheim As a Comedian

TOHN W. Considine Jr. did a daring bit of casting when he assigned Louis Wolheim to carry one of the leading parts through seven reels of comedy. Wolheim has been one of our most ferocious villains in the pictures in which I have seen him. The contour of his nose-he will have to pardon the personal reference, for it has been one of his assets as a heavy-makes his countenance more adaptable to the expression of ignoble emotions than to those of tenderness or romance. What prompted Johnnie Considine to cast him as a comedian I do not know, but I do know that it was a brilliant stroke. Wolheim is simply immense in Two Arabian Knights which was produced by Howard Hughes and Considine for United Artists release. He is a splendid actor and the externals that made him a satisfactory villain play their part in revealing him as a capital comedian. His team-mate in this picture is William Boyd, the big fellow with a most engaging smile, good looks and considerable ability as an actor. The two of them give us the best war comedy that I have seen. Two Arabian Knights steers shy of all the absolute rot that characterized Behind the Front and Tin Hats. Wolheim and Boyd are presented as two ordinary American doughboys in full possession of their senses, and everything they do might be done by sane people. The fun, therefore, is honest fun. At no place in the film is slapstick resorted to and we are not called on to laugh at absurdities. A notable feature of this comedy is the richness of its investiture. It has an elaborate and artistic production, quite the equal of those we look for in our ambitious romantic dramas. W. Cameron Menzies has given us another series of his beautiful settings and the cameraman has photographed them in a way that brings out all their beauty. Lewis Milestone's direction is inspired at times and never is without merit. It is not altogether a director's picture, but Milestone makes it nearly so. The greater length of the picture deals with the tribulations of the two soldiers after they escape from a German prison camp. The events leading up to their capture and incarceration provide some of the richest comedy in the production, as well as some of the finest direction and photography. There is one remarkable shot showing a ring of German bayonets around the rim of a shell hole in the bottom of which the two American soldiers are settling with their fists the traditional animosity that exists between a sergeant and a private, the conviction of the two of them that they can not escape alive being the private's excuse for the liberty he takes. There is a touch of sentiment in the scene showing the inception of the friendship of the two, which is the theme of the story. The beautiful Mary Astor is the girl in the picture and she acquits herself quite creditably, although I could not help thinking that she and Bill Boyd are not exactly the types that should play opposite one another. In the greater part of the film her face is veiled, only her eyes showing, but with them alone she plays beautifully and effectively her share of her first love scene with Boyd. There are many clever gags in Two Arabian Knights that are going to be greeted with hilarious laughter when the picture reaches the public. John W. Considine Jr. supervised the production and is to be congratulated upon giving us one of the best produced and most diverting comedies of the season. I quite agree with Mike Levee who assured me in low but emphatic tones that the picture is in the can. Two Arabian Knights will be a successful comedy, and I hope Considine will give us a lot more with as much real merit.

Carl Laemmle Jr. Makes His Debut

ARL Laemmle Jr. has supervised his first feature length picture. His supervision makes the picture important. Some day this young chap is going to be a power in pictures, the extent of his power being the extent of his ability to apply it. He is interesting on account of being the first of the second generation of picture people. The personal affairs of the motion picture personnel occupy none of my attention and I am not a reliable authority on such matters, but I believe that Carl Laemmle is the only really big man in screen circles who has a son old enough to occupy an executive position in a studio. Junior is Carl's only son, by virtue of which he becomes an interesting figure. Some day the fates of many picture people will rest in his hands and it is important to know if he gives promise of proving equal to the big job that some day will be his. When I heard that he was supervising a feature, I did some snooping for you, my aim being to discover if he really were supervising or only thought he was, or not even that. I found out that he was on the job sure enough. He is the only boy old enough to shave who was born in pictures, and I congratulate his father on the fact that the son is enamored of them. He has picture sense. He backed me successively into nearly all the corners on the Universal lot and made me listen while he told me the things they were going to put into his first big picture, displaying an enthusiasm that needs only ability to make it a potent factor. And judging by the picture, Too Many Women, he has the ability. Of course I do not discount Bill Beaudine's direction, but I am quite sure that he will concede that Junior is one of the things somewhat rare in pictures, a supervisor who helps. Too Many Women is a rather frothy thing, containing a whole lot of entertainment. thing I liked about it is that it is absolutely clean. There

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is not a suggestive foot of film in it, thus showing that Junior is off to a good start. Lois Moran and Norman Kerry play the leadings roles, and their romance is told delightfully. In course of the romance some real comedy is developed, and when the picture is released it is going to be responsible for a lot of laughter. Beaudine directs with his usual sympathy. He has a marked ability for taking a sequence that has little story value in it and making it entertaining. He also possesses a keen sense of humor, more marked in this picture than in any other of his that I can recall. It's a far cry from Sparrows to Too Many Women, and only a talented director could do so well with two pictures which differ so greatly. Lois Moran gives a delightful performance. She has a few opportunities to shed tears, and is as convincing as usual in the pathetic scenes, but her whole role is happier than any other that I have seen her in of late, and in the happy scenes she is as lively and sweet as one could wish. Norman Kerry has a role that fits him admirably, that of a rich man-about-town, strongly susceptible to the charms of a multitude of women until he meets the right one, in the quest of whom he concentrates all the fervor he formerly had scattered so widely. Lee Moran provides much entertaining comedy. A refreshing departure in the picture is the absence of explanatary titles introducing Lois and Norman. We are not told who they are and it makes no difference. We see them, and that is enough. If Junior Laemmle never supervises a poorer picture than Too Many Women he is going to be all right.

Samuel Bischoff's Latest Dog Opus

CAM BISCHOFF makes no bones about the fact that he reads The Spectator and that he puts into his pictures a lot of the things that I say should be in them. This puts me up against it. If I roast one of Sam's pictures it would be an acknowledgement that my advice is bad. Some weeks ago, before I knew that I was an unconscious collaborator in the making of his pictures, I saw Sam's The Snarl of Hate, a picture in which Johnnie Walker shared honors with Silverstreak, a dog. I extolled it for its naturalness and humanness, and advocated the inclusion of more heart interest in dog pictures. I have seen another in which the same stars appear. Johnnie, of course, is the same capable actor we know him to be, but the dog shows great improvement. He has become quite an actor. This picture, Where Trails Begin, is good enough to be shown anywhere. Noel Mason Smith has given it the same sensible direction that he gave The Snarl of Hate. There is nothing ridiculous in it, something that I never was able to say about any Rin Tin Tin picture I have seen. The human appeal that I maintain should be in dog pictures is in this one. Silverstreak is shown as an outlaw with a wife and family. The family is composed of three jolly pups that win the heart of anyone. One shot showing them having a tug-of-war with a chunk of meat is the best piece of comedy relief I have seen for a long time. The villain shoots the mother of the puppies, and thereafter Silverstreak's one object in life is to get revenge. This gives the picture some point. Everything that the dog does is convincing and appears to be a thing that a dog would do. Both the Bischoff pic-tures that I have seen have the same merit, which reflects

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credit on the direction of Smith. We sympathize with the dog's motive in pursuing the villain more deeply than we would if he were engaged in assisting to apprehend a criminal who had committed a breach of a man-made law, as all other dogs I have seen in pictures have been. His care of his mate and her pups has real appeal. The story of Ben Allah is a straightforward one and its development is interesting. Smith does not make his human characters detract from the story by over-acting. Walker gives a very good performance. He is a fine type of young American and I would like to see him in more pictures. Hughie Mack contributes a lot to this picture. He is very fat, architecturally an asset for a comedian, but he possesses also a keen comedy sense and is an excellent actor. His comedy is not dragged into the picture by the scruff of its neck, but has its part in the telling of the story. Charlotte Stevens is entirely satisfactory as the girl. Sam Bischoff apparently approves of my arguments in favor of the correct punctuation of titles. Those in this picture are punctuated flawlessly. I find in them something else that I have advocated-a poetic quality when the scenes they introduce warrant it. There is some magnificent photography in this little picture. There are dozens of snow scenes that possess great beauty. All in all, Where Trails Begin is a dog picture that can teach other producers a lot about how such pictures should be produced.

"Bitter Apples" Is a Bitter Dose

THEN the ship in which Monte Blue and Myrna Loy cruise around the world in Bitter Apples is wrecked it carries to its watery grave a secret process for the preservation of flowers which would be worth millions to Kathleen Clifford. As the boat is crossing the equator its main salon is dolled up for the wedding of Monte and Myrna. Flowers are everywhere, chrysanthemums, gladioli and other varieties that flitted by too rapidly for me to spot them. The bride carries a beautiful bouquet of roses, the bridesmaids carry roses and forget-me-nots, and Monte wears a carnation in his button-hole. All the flowers are so fresh that it is hard to believe that they were transported a few thousand miles to catch up with the ship in time for the wedding. The ship had a bar that was unlike any bar that I ever saw at sea, and I have seen the bar on each ship I have traveled on. This one stood out as they once did in American saloons, and the bottles stood in orderly rows behind it. The ship is wrecked, passengers and crew are thrown every which way, but the bottles are not disturbed in the slightest, demonstrating that being full of liquor has its good points. Monte and Myrna are left alone on the great ship and the next time we see them their clothes are in tatters, demonstrating that having nothing to do on a luxuriously furnished ocean liner is awfully hard on wearing apparel. At the time of the wreck Monte is in evening clothes. After the time lapse we see him in linen trousers, but still wearing his dress coat. How did he lose his dress trousers? What happened to his shirt? If he could find a pair of linen trousers why couldn't he find a shirt that wasn't in tatters? Monte dines in the main salon of the -ship. It is a great place and one candle in a whiskey bottle illuminates it brilliantly without casting shadows.



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Monte wanders into another part of the ship and carries the candle with him. Every cabin he enters is all lit up before he arrives and the candle makes no difference in the lighting. Myrna does even better. She prepares a meal in the galley without even a candle, having to rely solely on the bright light that envelopes the whole place. During a love scene between the two there is a title which says, "During the night a mysterious ship comes alongside." then the love scene goes ahead and we don't see the mysterious ship coming alongside. I expected to see another title cut into it giving the latest quotation on Julian Pete. The mysterious ship is a pirate craft, despite the fact that there aren't any any more, and although they have an abandoned liner to plunder, the pirates remain on it only a few minutes and carry off only a few silver ornaments. The next morning a United States coast patrol cutter, absent-mindedly slithering around in the vicinity of the equator, a few thousand miles farther from home than such a cutter ever went before, rescues Monte and Myrna when they are having a terrific fight with a lot of fearfully rude pirates. I have enumerated only a few of the features of Bitter Apples that made it a picture which fascinated me. The wreck is very well done, but the story is just as tattered as Monte's shirt. I may have seen a more ridiculous picture some time or other, but I don't think so. Even if the story had any sense in it, which it has not, the awful technical direction would have ruined it. If all the mistakes were forced on Harry Hoyt, who directed it, it will be all right with me if he shoots up the Warner Brothers studio. He ought to do something about it.

"Chinese Parrot" Is Not Leni's Best

AUL LENI has not made as good a picture out of The Chinese Parrot as he did out of The Cat and the Canary. He has used weird shots until they lose their effectiveness by their frequency. Every shot in a picture should be presented as someone sees it, either the audience or some character or characters. In The Parrot he shoots a cabaret dance platform from immediately above it, without planting anyone clinging to the ceiling to look down upon it. Sojin enters a room in which there are half a dozen people. We see at first an indistinct glow which dissolves into Sojin. This is mere trickery. Sojin might have appeared that way to someone with a bun on, but as all the people he is approaching are quite sober I can see no excuse for the weirdness. There is no place in a picture for a photographic stunt that is included solely on account of its status as a stunt. There are some very effective dissolves showing a Chinese New Year celebration, and such shots are used legitimately, for they portray vividly the mood of the celebration. A striking example of this, perhaps the best I ever saw, was the manner in which Lubitsch showed the artists' ball in So This Is Paris! If we are to judge Leni by his two American-made pictures we are to give him high rank as an artist in photography and lighting. There is not a shot in The Parrot that is not a delight to the eye. He composes and lights his scenes superbly, and his cameraman invests them with a velvety richness that makes them magnificent examples of screen art. When I reviewed The Cat I complained that Leni did not allow his people to act. He does not commit that sin in his second picture. In it he does not even stop at making them act. He makes them over-act. Sojin is the hero by virtue of the importance of his part, and gives an amazingly clever performance, displaying an astonishing array of facial expressions, but is made to exaggerate extravagantly his impersonation of a waiter. Albert Conti gives a very convincing performance as the main heavy, but even when alone in a long corridor he slinks along the wall in a manner that would make him no less conspicuous even if there were somebody around. Hobart Bosworth plays a dual role with his usual sincerity, and Ed Kennedy is quite a delightful roughneck. Marian Nixon is the girl and Edmund Burns the young fellow who is in love with her. Neither has much to do, but does what there is to do all right. J. Grubb Alexander and Edward Montagne were responsible for the story, and I think they might have turned out a better one. There is nothing in it that grips the audience. While I have criticized Leni's direction as contributing to the picture's weakness, I must, at the same time, give him the credit for all its merits, for it by no means is without merit. He has given a cheap and ordinary crook melodrama an artistic presentation, and makes its appeal to the eye atone greatly for its lack of appeal to the intellect. His first picture gave me a good opinion of him as a director, and his second does little to disturb it. He is more the artist than the storyteller, but perhaps when he gets a better story than he had this time he will give us a better picture. Anything he does is worth looking at, and that is something.

Pictures Cut to One Pattern

THE Spectator has ten readers to-day to every one it had on August seven last year. In the issue of that date there was a discussion of motion picture executives. There has been a considerable demand for the number, as the article seemed to have created some interest. For some months there have been no copies on hand with which to fill the demand. I have received several requests to reprint the article in order to give it the benefit of the increased circulation that The Spectator now has, and I comply with the requests herewith. It was in four paragraphs, concluding with the one bearing the heading, "I Don't Like It, Their Battle Cry." The first paragraph

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follows: Literature is entertaining in the degree that it reflects the contrasting thoughts and personalities of those who write it. The stage charms us because it presents a wide range of different treatments of the standard plots, because it expresses as many minds as there are dramatists. All the arts have prospered solely because they have not been dominated by one mind or a set standard. No one says of literature that it has grown monotonous; no one says that this or that is "typical literary stuff." Nor is a similar charge brought against the spoken stage. There is no "typical stage stuff." Literature and the drama have existed for centuries without becoming monotonous. The screen is the newest of the arts. It came upon the scene at a time when the world had reached its highest stage of intellectual development, when mental expression was enjoying its greatest freedom from traditional domination, bigotry and legal restraint. It offered to creative minds a new and amazing method of expression, so simple in its application and so unlimited in its possibilities that if it had been given an unhampered opportunity it would have captured instantly the thinking people of the universe, and to-day would be the greatest art. But despite its youth we hear every day of "typical movie stuff." The poor infant has accumulated moss already! Have the minds that kept literature free from this taint become standardized suddenly? Have dramatists abruptly become afflicted with paralysis of their creative faculties? There is no similarity between the novels of Ibanez, Conrad, Galsworthy, Elinor Glyn, Curwood, Grey, Roche, Arlen and Tarkington, but pictures made from the novels are monotonously alike, are just "typical movie stuff." They do not find the favor with the public that they should, because the public likes variety. The same writers who gave it books it likes, give it pictures that tire it. And yet pictures are made to be sold to the public and prosper to the extent that they can be sold.

Pictures Are Not Made for Public

HE chief weakness of the whole moving picture structure is that pictures are not made for the public, that they are made for Irving Thalberg, B. P. Schulberg, John McCormick, Jack Warner, Harry Rapf, Hector Turnbull, John W. Considine, Jr., William Sistrom, Benny Fineman, Henry Hennigson, Sol Wurtzel, and the rest of the production executives. These men, and others both here and in the East, take upon themselves the interpretation of the mind of the public. "I don't like it," is the final word on any suggestion made in connection with a picture. Writers and directors have given up trying to please the public; their sole aim is to please the men I have mentioned. Authors who have become rich and famous because they have acquired the knack of pleasing the public, come out here and go back home because they can not please Irving Thalberg. The writers who produce a story for Paramount and the director who makes it into a picture would waste the time they spent in considering what the public would like. Their one mission is to turn out a work that Ben Schulberg will like. Now, it may be that no fault whatever can be found with this method of making pictures; it may be that Irving and Ben know exactly what the public wants and that when either says "I don't like it," he really means that the public

would not like it. Perhaps it is the same with Harry Rapf, Johnnie Considine and the rest. Each of them may be able to do what no other man in the history of the world has been able thus far to do, to determine in advance what the public will like. As a group, they may possess this uncanny wisdom, which was denied man until there came into existence a new race of mental giants known as motion picture executives, to none except whom has this supernatural power been given. Granting that these men know their onions makes a mystery of the search for those who are responsible for the fact that the public yawns at pictures and talks about "typical movie stuff." We can't blame the writers, for what they write of their own free will never reaches the screen; we can't blame the directors, for Sol Wurtzel's or John McCormick's "I don't like it" shuts the gate on their initiative. The people to blame for a sustained flaw in a product are they who control its output. Executives select the stories, approve the continuity, name the director, fill the roles, view the rushes, pass on the cutting and revise the titles. What we see on the screen is the residue of the "I don't like it" reduction. Many poor pictures are made in Hollywood. Those I have named, and a few others, control the output of Hollywood's motion picture factories. A system which produces a poor product needs changing.

Limited Mentally by Minds of Executives

AD one group dictated to the Dutch painters, Dutch pictures would have been alike. From the time of Huybecht down to the modern exponents of the Flemish school, it would make little difference whose works you would choose. The colors of Van Dyck, Rubens, Frans Hals, Rembrandt and Van Ruysdael would have been mixed according to formula; their brushes would have been controlled by hands other than theirs, and the wide range of their expression would have been reduced to just "typical Dutch stuff." The screen can develop its Rubens and its Rembrandts if the shackles are removed from the screen art; it can have its Shakespeares and its Shaws when production supervisors throw open the gate. The industry is big enough and rich enough to employ the brains of

ALFRED HUSTWICK

FILM EDITOR AND
TITLE WRITER

New Telephone WHitney 3240

Page Fourteen June 11, 1927

the world, but under the present system it can not express itself mentally beyond the mental capacity of those who control its output. It suffers to-day from the lack of utilization of the brains within its ranks. "I don't like it" is its ultimate limit. The pictures that Irving Thalberg supervises reflect the things he likes. That most of them have been brilliant successes is no reason why they should go on forever as an expression of his likes and dislikes. He might get indigestion. And there always is the possibility that someone with whom he comes in contact may have an idea that he does not like, but which would be received pleasantly by the public. The "I don't like it" system is a menace to pictures, an absolute bar to its progress. For one thing, the public does not care a continental what Jack Warner or Hector Turnbull likes or dislikes; and for another, there are on the lots where these men have power several people whose backgrounds equip them to be better judges of the public taste These people can not use their knowledge, for it is not the public taste that they are to consider. If they wish to hold their jobs their ideas must conform to the likes and dislikes of their employers. The public be damned!

"I Don't Like It," Their Battle Cry

TE MUST have production supervisors. I would not abolish the present group if I could, for they are very agreeable chaps whom it is a pleasure to know. They are capable—brilliantly capable, most of them. I share Louis Mayer's enthusiasm for his staff; congratulate Jesse Lasky upon his wisdom in selecting such a genius as Ben Schulberg to supervise Western production; think Joseph Schenck is fortunate in having such an able lieutenant as my friend, Johnnie Considine -and so on, down the line. As supervisors I admire them, as much as as individuals I like them. It is as self-constituted custodians of the world's taste in entertainment that I quarrel with them. They have proclaimed themselves dictators and with "I don't like it" emblazoned on their shields, are riding rough shod over the brains of the world, crushing inspiration beneath arrogant hoofs and dimming genius with the dust they make. They are keeping out of pictures the mental giants they might enlist and molding what creative brains they now control to conform to their own conceptions of the public taste. People will forget "typical movie stuff" if executives will remember that there will be diversity in pictures when diversified brains are employed in their making, when the product of a given unit ceases to reflect only the personal tastes of its head. The head, of course, must control the unit, must have the final decision on all matters pertaining to a given picture I have no criticism to make of the power he possesses. It is his mental attitude that I quarrel with, his assumption that this position outweighs another's experience in deciding what makes good screen material. A noted author, who gained his fame by gauging accurately the public taste, writes a story for the screen and an executive, who never created one idea that went forth for public consumption, tells him the public will not like it. Perhaps the public wouldn't, but I maintain that the author's experience makes him the better judge and that the executive's mission is occasionally to let another judgment prevail and confine himself to

directing the course of the other's idea until it reaches the screen. At least he might try it until the public stops yawning.

In Captain Salvation Sam de Grasse commands Lars Hanson to approach him. Hanson hesitates. De Grasse sternly repeats the command and shows that he will not tolerate a refusal. He is domineering, inflexible. The scene is presented in a medium shot in which Sam's back is towards the camera. We do not see his face, but in his rigid form and in the compelling gesture of his arm we get the full force of the scene. The manner of shooting keeps Hanson in the shot, enabling us to see past De Grasse and note the reaction of Hanson to the command. It is one of the best bits of direction that John S. Robertson did in the picture. The majority of directors would have weakened the scene with a succession of closeups of the two men. Producers complain that they can not get stories with drama in them. If they allowed directors to shoot scenes in a way that would accentuate the drama they would find that there is a lot of it lurking in almost every script. Close-ups, not authors, are to blame for the scarcity of real drama on the screen.

If picture producers would study Eddie Peabody's popularity they would learn something that they could apply to their films. Peabody appeals to the public because he is absolutely clean. There is not the slightest hint at anything suggestive on any of his programs. He attracts the kind of people who stick. Gene Morgan is just the opposite. He goes as far as he dare towards smut, consequently his popularity is not to be compared with Peabody's. Every time I am forced to sit through one of Morgan's acts I feel that he is about to say, "I could tell you a really dirty one if I could get away with it."



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ARMCHAIR ADVENTURES

By Edgcumb Pinchon



WHAT is an artist? And what is a highbrow? The question is pertinent to me because recently I received a letter hailing me as both in the same breath! And this by a lady with brains enough to do better!

As to what constitutes the artist I shall attempt a definition of my own. The human organism is really an instrument capable of the most beautiful and varied response to impressions. Where this response is correct, keen, delicate and deep you have artistic possibility. Where there is also the urge and power to express this responsiveness to impression in palpable form, word or tone or clay, there you have the artist in full flower.

In this view we can easily see why it is that the artist is always the "giver", in a world of "getters". And why he will labor ridiculously for the smallest success in transmitting his impressions into form. There is no virtue in the fact. He is made that way. He cares for nothing but that the truth be made flesh and walk the earth—the truth which is the tuneful response of his own organism to the miracle of creation.

The high-brow, on the contrary, is one whose brain is active, but whose organism as a whole is dull and unresponsive. And so when he approaches pen, brush, chisel or keyboard he is forced by this fact to become an impostor. He can transmit truly nothing; for his dull unresponsiveness of nerve tissue gives him nothing to transmit. His activity, therefore, becomes divorced from the palpitant reality of the actual world, and soon is found to be nothing but an effort to obtain a tinsel reputation for superiority among the dull.

To which of these two types I approximate I shall leave my fair correspondent to judge. But in order that she may come to a correct decision I feel that she ought to have at least the advantage of a clear definition of terms. So that when she says "artist" and when she says "highbrow" she will know just what she means to convey. I know there are a great many good folks abroad who have no word in their limited vocabularies to indicate a thought beyond their customary measure other than the lazy epithet "high-brow". But these do not read "The Armchair Adventures" and I suppose we shall

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have to leave them where they are for the present.

It was pondering somewhat in this fashion that I found myself the other day entering the offices of a large commercial organization. The vivid black-eyed little person who took my card, glanced at it with a quick smile, passed it to her chum at the switchboard, and then flashed at me, "You are not the one who writes in The Film Spectator, are you?" When I admitted the charge the two girls promptly hugged each other with delight and neither could wait for the other to tell me the story.

It seems that riding home on the street car the little person with the amazing black eyes had been reading aloud to her companion a recent review of mine. Several nearby passengers began to "listen in". Others joined them and soon a discussion started which presently produced something in the nature of a riot!

These lively young persons said they followed keenly everything I wrote. Acquittal complete! I felt that if I could create this kind of reaction among little stenographers and switchboard girls and plain folk who ride on street cars, I could well afford to be content, and let those cry "highbrow" who will.

Enough!

Comes a new novel, The Old Countess, from the popular pen which wrote Tante and The Little French Girl. There is no doubt that Anne Douglas Sedgwick has a myriad feminine fans; and I am very sure that back of her book I should find, were I to meet her, a very gracious and charming personality of a type now passing away. And having said that, I fain would hurry on before I let my tea-cup manners swamp me.

Pale mauve erotic sentimentality, a beautiful, brutal, Byronic young man, a sweet English girl all ideals and renunciations, hands that are always "silver", water that endlessly "ripples", preciousness, adolescent reverie of the 'teens, a lady-like avoidance of every issue, and a facile meaningless style to match! Such is the Old Countess. Is it possible that the women of America do not yet know that since yesterday a stark, beautiful new world has been born that is death to such twaddle as this? But the publishers put it in gold covers. It is a best seller. Let it pass!

Happy Honore Willsie Morrow to have made such a book as Forever Free, to have taken Abraham Lincoln out of his bloody shroud and set him down at meat with us, yarning, chuckling, darning socks, playing with his boys and dogs and between whiles steering these States through the rocks and shoals of imminent disaster!

The art of this book baffles criticism. To say that it is an honest, vivid, accurate reconstruction of the most critical period in American history, the first two years of Lincoln's administration, is to give but a meagre idea of it. Thus to blend historical accuracy with the skill of the novelist is to achieve a triumph in a form of literature which is rapidly assuming an important place. Records, biographies, diaries, these do not live and walk abroad until the breath of the creative imagination has blown upon them. Good it were if history could thus be written and taught. To have read Forever Free, one feels, is to have lived for two years in poignant intimacy with the most significant figure in modern history.

And why significant? Perhaps no better word of praise could be given Honore Willsie Morrow's book than to say that, without word of comment,

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it admits us to the secret of Lincoln's greatness. As we watch him bowing before his good wife's outbursts and gathering her into his arms afterwards, imperturbably and with gentlest unconcern absorbing the insults of the daily press, the half-concealed sneers of his cabinet, the brutal impudence of General McClellan—it begins to dawn upon us why this man walked with open eyes amid the blind, and moved with the force of im-

placable destiny when his hour came.

He was a man without ego. That was all.

His first cabinet meeting taught him how little of wisdom he could expect from his own supporters. It was a display of all the passions of the unrealized ego. Vanity, ambition, envy, jealousy, prejudice, frothed and foamed, effectually clouding every eye to the work in hand. And Lincoln deliberately let them display themselves in their true light. He passed no judgment, expressed no resentment. He must know clearly just what he had to deal with in these men. That was all. They insulted him. It was of no importance. There was nothing in him that could be insulted. Seward sought to belittle him; but retreated baffled before his lack of amour propre. A myth, a god, almost has become this man who wanted nothing for himself but the satisfaction of a job well done.

Nor in this was there any lack of dignity or spirit. McClellan could insult Lincoln all he pleased without remark. But when he undertook to affront the high office which Lincoln served he found himself rebuked with the prompt and impersonal decisiveness of a master dealing with a brawling schoolboy. And when the moment came for great decisions, when, in fact, in the selfless mind of this man the true path of American destiny had become clear, his will was adamant and his action a sabrestroke. Then the little puffy sirs all about him whom he loved and humored and forbore, must willynilly toe the line and come sharply to attention in the presence of that which he himself served before all things—the need of a people in travail.

A private view of Lincoln during his first two years in the White House is all the book vouchsafes us. Would it were more! And it is the Lincoln in grey wool socks, felt slippers and old dressing gown, poring over Hallecks' Strategy or chortling over Artemus Ward, that we see. And the portrait commingles without a break with the Lincoln who leisurely tested every man in his cabinet, cannily gathered information against the momentous days ahead, brooded and wrestled through the long hours of many a night until, sure of his course, and having broken the haughty and dilatory McClellan across his knee, he struck the mighty blow of the Proclamation of Emancipation, and decided then and there the destiny not only of America but of the whole modern world.

From My Seat In The Theatre

By ELISE DUFOUR

GREATNESS is always simple. Actors composed of mannerisms and affectations on the stage are people of no substance in private life.

Constance Collier, on the contrary, so sincere and expressive in her acting, is one of the most real women in London. To chat with her by a grate fire in her characteristic apartment in York House is to find her openminded, well-informed and inspiring. That popular young actress, Katherine Kornell, is entirely devoid of strange accent of voice or of insincerity of manner. I sat next to her in a box at The Theatre Guild and during our conversations I thought how very few modern young women in public life could compete with this unspoiled young artist for depth and beauty of quality. I found the same sincerity in Kathleen MacDonnell when I visited her dressing-room during a performance of The Dancers. She stood still dressed as "Delphine": her expressive face lit with real interest in what I was saying and entirely forgetful of her own importance.

It has been three years now since I've had the pleasure of such contacts with the stage in either London or New York, but New York comes to California and so I've again had a pleasant hour with a consummate artist who is first of all a real and delightful human being.

* * *

Otis Skinner met me at the Biltmore with that simple richness that can come only from having lived long and well. There never has been a trick in this tried actor's beautiful performances. Working on the premise, as he expresses it, that "simplicity and honesty are the basis of all true living and sincere art", Mr. Skinner represents the best that the American stage has contributed to the art of acting. Although he has been before the public for many years and with a range from Hamlet to Petruchio, from Prince Otto to Kismet, on through many various plays and parts to The Honor of the Family, his present vehicle, he never can be labeled "old school", and this because his art is expressionistic rather than impressionistic.

Impressionism reflects the time, the caprice of fashion—but expressionism is concerned with the changeless human emotions, the same to-day as in Babylon and Rome. And thus the years have taken nothing from Mr. Skinner's acting, but on the contrary have brought to his performance a humanness that is much beloved.

I asked him how the motion picture is affecting the stage; and like all actors he said: "For the moment, unfortunately. The cinema is the amusement of the laboring man whose day it is, since he makes the money, while the man who works with his brain goes poor. The working man wants amusement without strain either on his brain or his emotions."

"The crowd," Mr. Skinner observed, "leaving a movie house has a listless gait and dull silence, in sharp contrast to the brisk animation of the audience that pours from the theatre. Even when the play is bad and indifferently acted the audience is com-

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pelled to feel and to carry that feeling into the street and home."

Then Mr. Skinner's dark eyes opened wide in mock seriousness. "Do you know who are the best actors in the movies?" He made an eloquent

gesture to mark his point—
"Babies and geese! And remember,
dogs draw some of the largest salaries."

Then he answered my question. "The main requisite in the photo-play is that the situation should do the acting and the player keep a placid face, no matter what is happening." He gave as an example John Gilbert in The Big Parade.

Mr. Skinner has not escaped the experience of the silver sheet which he admits was most interesting, "much like seeing one's self in a mirror." His colorful production of Kismet was filmed "to the music of a great organ." His expressive face flashed me a whimsical smile as he said, "Of course, you know no one could endure a motion picture without the support of music.

He found it difficult to act with only the director and the camera men for audience, for Mr. Skinner says the theatre is made up of both audience and player, each having a distinct role. He told an amusing story of the actress who played the part of his abused daughter in Kismet; how the director tried "to make her feel bad" to the accompaniment of the great organ and his dramatic recital of the awful things her father had done to her! But she only sat dull-eyed under this external application of histrionic poultice and simply could not break out "into feeling bad". At last she buried her face in her hands and cried, "Play Kiss Me Again", and through such stimulus she managed to squeeze out a few tears over a placid face.

"So you see," Mr. Skinner con-cluded, "all this is quite new for an actor and entirely contrary to the requirements for success on the stage.

Then we spoke about the practical side of the matter. In making the long run from coast to coast one-night stands are quite necessary to meet expenses. The theatres are all engaged with films and the interruption of such with added expense of stage hands is not practical. However, there are people in these small places who demand a play occasionally. The photoplay has not yet entirely de-stroyed the public taste for "the

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spoken drama," he said, and laughed softly as he used that ill-advised label for his chosen profession. He thinks the art of the theatre will never be destroyed, even in America, by the film industry; and that in Europe it will be much less affected.

Delightfully he described a performance of The Taming of the Shrew that he saw last summer in Elsinore, Denmark. It was played with spirit, vitality and beauty. Famous himself as Petruchio, he found a rare pleasure in Johann Polsen's brilliant performance, even though ignorant of the Danish language.

When he is in Paris Mr. Skinner goes often to "La Comedie Francaise," if for nothing but to study method. Here also he saw a performance of The Taming of the Shrew, but it was artificial and without roots, he

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going to play The Merry Wives of Windsor. Mr. Skinner made a gesture to indicate the rotundity of Falstaff, "I shall be 'way out here," he laughed.

For the Honor of the Family is playing for two weeks at The Play-house, and Mr. Skinner says he has a good company.

KARLE KARPE

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VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

FROM TOLEDO, OHIO

Dear Mr. Beaton:

De Mille may not have created a masterpiece when he produced The Yankee Clipper, but here is one customer who feels he received his money's worth. That beatific state of mind, however, was not induced by any excellencies of acting or direction, but by the dramatic use made of "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," the theme song of the picture, a composition which was written by an actor for a benefit performance in 1843, and which so appealed to our British cousins that they appropriated and sang it as "Britannia, the Gem of the Ocean". Consequently, it is often listed as an old English air, even so distinguished a musician as Sousa attributing it to this source. While the picture was weak and did not build up to a strong climax, the music seemed to carry it along, and to one familiar with the words and possessed of a fair amount of sentiment, it could not fail to thrill.

I think if I were an extra, yearning to set the world on fire, I would try to apply the torch in a picture like The Yankee Clipper, for when one begins yawning over the work of the principals, what is supposed to be background speedily catches the eye and marches to the front. In this picture, for instance, the work of the extra playing the stowaway was so noticeable that I stayed on and saw the picture a second time. Such utter helplessness, such blinking bewilderment and mute resignation one seldom sees projected on the screen, and I gained the impression that it was the young man's first appearance before the camera, and that he really was confused. His name was not given, but he strongly resembled Forrest James, the mountaineer boy in Stark Love, if, indeed, as I suspect, he is not Forrest James himself.

While I am not an authority on court etiquette, the scene in which Queen Victoria appeared seemed to me very naive and unsophisticated. Do queens discuss matters of commerce and state while sitting on a throne? The council chamber would seem to be a more appropriate place for such occasions.

appropriate place for such occasions. But despite its many faults, I liked The Yankee Clipper, if for no other reason than the excellent acting of Junior Coghlan. I recently saw this young man in Slide, Kelly, Slide, and was deeply impressed by the way in which the scenes between him and William Haines were played. They were absolutely natural and true to life, and lent to the picture that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin. Junior has a long way to travel, however, before he can equal the work of Philippe de Lacy. Philippe may not be a genius, but if not, he approaches it so closely that most of us can not distinguish the difference. I often wonder why De Mille has never used as picture material the

story of the Taj Mahal, the "jeweled tomb" of Agra, India. Here is romance fit for the hand of a master, and of such irresistible appeal that Time can not erase it from the memory of men.

A LETTER FROM ENGLAND

Dear Sir:

Do let me say how much I enjoy The Film Spectator, and how very heartily I appreciate your anti-close-up campaign and demand for the use of common sense and natural good feeling in directing incidents in pictures. Your example of Vera Lewis stepping over the dog—or, rather, not stepping over it—in The Music Master exactly detects what is wrong with nearly all films, and "Explaining the Literary Touch" develops it still further. There can not really be any reason why script writers and directors should not make film characters behave like human beings: except that it rarely occurs to them. And unless they do, the films will remain as unconvincing and shallow as mostly they now are.

I naturally can't help wishing, however that a slightly clearer idea of the British film situation were grasped in the States. It isn't, as your paper seems to feel, that agitators for more British films are trying to force unpopular British films on the public in place of popular American ones. Good British films are terribly popular in England. For instance Mademoiselle from Armentieres has broken records and stretched the walls of cinemas all over the country; and before that Mons did.

Only about twenty-five films get produced here every year; they are under-financed because the market is so small. A good many of them are almost entirely lacking in point or interest. In fact, a quantity of British

films are as bad as the worst American films. You can imagine, however, that out of twenty-five films a year, none of them costing much, the chances of getting more than three or four good films is very small. The amount of experience offered to new talent is also small.

It isn't at all that anyone wants to stop good American films coming here; in fact, every paper has said we want and must have the best American films. But most of us long for the day when this country will produce a film as good as, say, Variety, and as English as that was German. We wish Beau Geste had been made here, too.

Your remedy for solving the British film problem is a great one. I only wish we could adopt it. But, honestly, with the picture theatres booked up blind years ahead with American outputs, and only about three thousand-odd picture theatres, so that the best films can only at most hope to

Somebody gets a break here. Instead of writing a story for George Jessel, I am writing one for Miss May McAvoy. Incidentally, "The Heart of Maryland" is going to be better than "White Flannels."

GRAHAM BAKER

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get about fifteen hundred bookings, isn't it at least a solution, however clumsy, to reserve a space in every conema here for a small percentage of British films, gradually increase the percentage, try to get an outlet in the States for the best British films, and then see?

IRIS PORTER.

Bloomsbury, London, England.

DOING IT PROPERLY

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Isn't there some way that we of the motion picture industry can show the world that we are grateful for our supreme heaven-sent knowledge of how to make things dramatic and universally interesting? It is platitudin-ous to say that no one ever has come within a mile of us in solving the complexities of mass imagination, mass entertainment, mass likes and dislikes. We all know that we have that market absolutely cornered. (Do excuse my insistence on delving into the glaringly obvious.) But, being aristocrats, it would become us, I think, to be generous about the thing and instruct those of the plebiscite explorers, pirates, baseball players, jazz slayers, bathing beauties, professional daredevils, for instance—who cause little or no flurry in the public imagination, in a few of the finer points of showmanship which Providence has placed squarely under our thumbs. Can't we show them that we aren't pigs about what we know and

what they don't?

Now look at this Lindbergh flight. If only one of our producers had taken hold of it and staged the thing properly, think how the public might have been made to thrill at it! They let that brave chap fly the Atlantic as though he were taking a Sunday morning walk home from church. Any movie producer could have shown them how and why they got off the path of drama at the very start.

He would have pointed out to the promoters that when a young aviator comes to them with plans for the realization of a long-cherished ambition to perform a great, unprecedented feat it is bad histrionics to say simply, "All right, go ahead. We've got faith in you. We'll back you." An imposing meeting of bankers and luncheon club presidents sitting at a mahogany convention table should be called, the producer would have explained; flags should be draped around and the entrance of the enterprising fellow ought to incite reporters to write,

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"Lindbergh, determination not unmingled with self-consciousness in his face and bearing, halted inside the great doors, then came across the highly-polished floor to make his first progress in an expedition which has been in his heart since boyhood."

"That's how we put on scenes in our studios," Mr. X, producer, would have told them. "And see how the public likes it! They don't want this sample, drab stuff. It don't thrill them."

And I think it was a crime to let Lindbergh hop off from San Diego unexpectedly; so that it was impossible for a big scene to take place, with crowds swarming all over the field, and men excitedly chewing feathers on women's hats, and fat women, in the jam, stepping on their squashed husbands' corns, for comedy relief. No wonder the public wasn't very gripped by news of the take-off.

And then when he had reached Paris after thirty-one hours of sleeplessness, his mother was no more awake to the drama of it than to get herself quoted as saying, "All I hope is that they let him sleep." If Mr. X had been at her side we can depend on it that he never would have let such trite humanness escape from her lips. In all properness, she would have been schooled to cry, "My country and my boy! Oh, I am so proud of them both!" That has sweep to it. What

she did say, unfortunately, was not appealing, not mother-like, as the producer himself would have shown; and therefore, on such a potentially dramatic occasion, not correct.

Lord! When I think of how the whole world might have been lifted off its feet by the exciting drama of what Lindbergh did if the affair had been sponsored by our industry in accordance with its own infallible orthodoxy, I almost weep for the lost glories of it. Can't The Spectator use its influence to disseminate in the unfortunate outside world the solid dramatic principles on which almost every one of our splendid program pictures are built?

HENRY GRATTAN.

H. TIPTON STECK

WRITER

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FILM SPECTATOR

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No. 9

The artistic emancipation of pictures will be brought about only by their financial reformation — see page 4.

IN THIS NUMBER

SOME REMARKS ON HOW THEY MARE THEM

The amazing inefficiency of the production staffs of the big organizations is responsible for an annual loss of millions of dollars that should go to the stockholders of the companies. When executives learn how to make pictures economically they will make them artistically.

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CREATIVE PATHS OF THE CINEMA

A valuable contribution to screen Discussion written by Dr. Alexander Arkatov, formerly Professor of Fine Arts at Moscow University and Dean of the Motion Picture Academy of Moscow, an authority who writes with conviction upon various phases of the making of pictures.

No insane thing that the industry has done is half so insane as the belief it holds that it can not do better — see page 6.

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is back from New York, but it doesn't seem to have relieved me of the necessity of filling his space. He's a funny old egg.

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The only publication conducted solely for those who THINK about motion pictures.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JUNE 25, 1927

Why It Pays Less Than Two Per Cent

AST year the capital invested in motion pictures earned less than two per cent .- to be exact, one and nine-tenths per cent. I congratulate those who control the industry. I don't understand how they allowed the one and nine-tenths to get away from them, but getting that close to absorbing all the returns requires an ingenuity in extravagance that I did not know they possessed. This year perhaps they will do better. It will be necessary only to start a few more pictures without properly prepared scripts, to keep a few more featured players and directors drawing salaries without working, and to shelve a half dozen or more completed productions. and the score will be perfect; there will not be even one and nine-tenths per cent. for those who hold the outstanding stock. It will serve the stockholders right. As long as invested capital is supine enough to submit to the manhandling it gets from the captains of the motion picture industry, just so long does it deserve to do without dividends. If the people who conduct the picture making end of the business had half the brains that the magnitude of the funds they handle would indicate they should have, the profits of the producing organizations would be enormous. No farce ever filmed is half so ridiculous as the film business itself. M.-G.-M. started The Mysterious Island, spent at least half a million dollars on it, and then abandoned it because it found out that it had no story to start with. The papers tell us that the same organization made a picture from Bellamy, the Magnificent, which was so lacking in merit that it was shelved, Paramount purchasing the right to produce the story. And the same organization started Anna Karenina, spent an enormous sum on it, scrapped everything it had done. and started over again. I suppose these three examples of the rank incompetence of the organization were re-

sponsible for the loss of one million dollars to the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer stockholders. That's two per cent. on fifty million dollars. No doubt Will Hays and other spokesmen will endeavor to earn sympathy for the industry as a whole because it earned less than two per cent. on its invested capital, yet in these three specific instances alone we find one of the units of the industry throwing away enough money to pay two per cent. on fifty million of this capital. And that is only a part of the money wasted annually by this organization. And what it wastes is only a part of the enormous wastage of all the producing organizations combined. The ignorance and indifference of those who control picture making in Hollywood are robbing the holders of motion picture securities of enough money to pay them handsome dividends. Louis B. Mayer can regard with complacency his ignorance of the economics of picture making because he is in a position to regard with satisfaction an apartment building in which he and Harry Rapf are investing one million dollars that pictures paid them. When he totals up the millions he has made out of pictures perhaps Mayer considers that to know more about how they should be made would be ostentatious. Before we indict the motion picture business for earning so little, or ask special favors for it on that account, we should add to the one decimal nine the Mayer-Rapf apartment house, Adolph Zukor's million dollar salary, Jesse Lasky's many millions, and several score Rolls-Royces. If we added all these, and credited earnings with all the money wasted by ignorant management, we would find that pictures, as manufactured articles, pay enormous dividends. But the stockholders do not get it.

The Money Orgy Can Not Go On

A S LONG as the motion picture industry pays such handsome dividends on mismanagement just so long may we view without compassion its failure to pay dividends on its invested capital. M.-G.-M. stockholders are unreasonable to expect adequate returns on their investments when they pay enormous salaries to men who waste a million dollars in three abortive attempts to

PICTURE MAGIC

"It is a picture with a soul,"
So wrote the critic for the press,
And we who saw the theme unfold,
Not knowing what he meant, said "Yes,"
And nodded wisely while we spoke,
"It has a soul; we felt its contact with our own,
A heightened tone, that we can not express—
As music steals sometimes when all is still;
Some vague, entrancing strain of Worlds or Space or Time
That breathes beyond our normal sense . . . sublime."

"It has a soul." And what is that
Of which we speak so pat, and still can not define?
That sense-enthralling thing, more strong than bands of
steel

To hold us in our seats lest we may miss
Some magic essence on the screen
That feeds some need within and makes us feel
That we are, perhaps, a part with the Great Universal
Heart

That throbs serene, though empires fall.

make motion pictures. Please do not get the impression that I consider Metro's the only incompetent organization. I just happened to hit upon it as an example. None of the big producing organizations is conducted in a manner that suggests business sanity. Those with ability to make pictures efficiently have not the authority to exercise it. When efficiency steps into the business our present executives will step out, because there will not be room for both. Then picture dividends will bound upwards, and the most grossly extravagant epoch in the industrial history of the United States will be at an end. And this time is not far off. Pictures are due for a shake-up. The reign of incompetency is about over, for those whose money is in the business are beginning to ask questions of one another. The East is pricking up its ears. I happen to be in a position to know that this is true. The Literary Digest has reprinted several articles from The Spectator and some of the financial papers of the East have quoted references I have made to the economic side of the business. Following the reproduction of each of the articles inquiries have been received from banks, bond houses and individuals not connected with pictures. The most frequent request is for sample copies of The Spectator and practically each copy sent out brings in a year's subscription. One mail brought in thirty-six subscriptions from Boston and its suburbs. I do not flatter myself that Eastern financial houses and individuals who have big business interests wish to know what I think about The King of Kings or Bitter Apples. I know that they desire to read anything available that relates to pictures as an investment. It is for them that I am writing these paragraphs. I want them to know that millions of dollars rightfully belonging to them are being sacrificed to the most ignorant management that a great industry ever was cursed with. I hope that some day they will realize this and insist upon a reform in the business in which they have invested. I am not endeavoring to kick up a fuss merely for the fun of watching it seethe. In fact, I am not interested in the financial side of pictures. I am interested in their artistic progress. But I realize that their artistic emancipation will be brought about only by their financial reformation. Those who conduct the business now plead that it is like no other, that the rules applying to other businesses do not apply to it. In this they are wrong. There is no basic difference between the manufacture of a motion picture and the manufacture of a pair of shoes. Common sense can be applied to the making of each. It is applied to shoes because those who make them have regard for the interests of those who own stock in the companies which employ them; it is not applied to pictures because those who make them do not care a damn for the stockholders in the picture companies. The operating heads of the companies pay themselves enormous salaries and give more thought to holding their jobs than to meriting them. They resist any suggestion of reform. As long as they can grow fat on incompetency they are content with it. They are indifferent to their own ignorance because it pays them tremendous dividends. They know nothing about making pictures and will not listen to those who do. They think that the screen is a mystery to which they hold the key. claim that waste is an inherent part of the business; yet there is no more reason for it in motion pictures than there is in building hotels.

They Say Film Is Quite Cheap

TYHEN Hugh Beaton planned the Roosevelt Hotel he saw that every cubby-hole that was to be in it had its place in his blueprints. The contractor was given a perfect set of plans and he built according to the plans. When one of our big producers plans a picture he disregards every rule of common sense. He has no idea how much footage his script calls for, which is as ridiculous as it would be for Hugh Beaton to start building his hotel without having any idea how many rooms there would be in it. The producer offers as an excuse that "the cheapest thing on the lot is film," which has as much sense in it as there would be in a statement by Colonel Beaton that there is nothing as cheap as bathrooms, meaning that it would be good sense to provide a lot of them and tear out a few dozen after the plumbing had been installed. The producer will view with complacency the litter that covers a cutting-room floor and tell you that it cost but a few cents a foot. If he had brains enough to conduct his business properly, he would know that every foot of that film cost him from thirtyfive dollars upwards per foot, depending on the cost of the production. Every foot of film that Paramount exposed for Old Ironsides and De Mille exposed for The King of Kings cost many hundreds of dollars. It is notjust film that lies on the floor; it is a fortune spent on sets, salaries, and lights. Last week I saw in four pictures long sequences that will be eliminated before the pictures will be released. Two of them will be eliminated at my suggestion, for I could not see that they had any story value. Two were cafe sequences, one showed a crowded street and the fourth a dance hall. The smallest had possibly eighty people in it and the largest at least three hundred. Three great sets were built for the interior scenes and a special street was constructed for the exterior. Every foot of film used in photographing these four sequences remains on the cutting-room floor after the pictures are released. And the people who made the pictures will tell you that this film cost but a few cents a foot! The worst feature of it is the complacency with which the heads of the organizations that made the pictures view this waste. They accept it as a matter of course and with not one-tenth as much concern as Hugh Beaton would display if his plumbing contractor told him that one of the hand basins in one of the hundreds of bathrooms was going to be scrapped. Beaton would argue, and argue rightly, that there was no excuse for the loss of the few dollars, for the contractor never should have installed the superfluous basin. He would make the contractor stand the loss, which would be in accord with ordinary business procedure. But picture people have a different way of doing business. If they were going to build a hotel they would tell you, to start with, that hotel building is unlike any other building, and that ordinary common sense could not be applied to it. They would have a hazy idea that they wanted about four hundred bathrooms; then they would build a thousand or so and pick out the four hundred that they fancied most. This is not an extravagant comparison. My Eastern readers may rest assured that everyone in Hollywood could tell them that I am not exaggerating in the slightest. Producers and directors really believe that the only way to

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make a seven-reel picture is to shoot one in anywhere from fourteen of several more reels, and cut the seven out of the miles of film. Von Stroheim shoots anywhere from twenty to thirty feet to every one that he can use, and we rate him as one of our greatest directors. If the builders of the Roosevelt Hotel erected fifty stories and pared them down to the twelve that constitute the finished structure all the world would stand aghast. The same thing is done in Hollywood every day and we applaud the people who do it.

Some Day Will Be Much Better

HERE never has been, and there never will be, any excuse for erecting a set which subsequently is not shown on the screen. Nor is there any excuse for shooting a hundred feet of any actor and showing but ten feet of him on the screen. There is no excuse for taking a long shot, a medium shot and a close-up of the same scene. There is no excuse for taking any scene that does not appear in the finished picture. All these extravagances for which I contend there is no excuse enter into the making of every picture produced in Hollywood. That is the way we make them, because we never have mastered the proper method of making them. In fact, the industry has not learned yet what a motion picture is. It thinks it is something akin to a stage play. It thinks it can assign an idea for a story and a collection of actors to a director and get a picture. It can. That is the way it gets its pictures now, and that is the reason they cost so much more than they should, the reason the great majority of them are mere trivial rot. The actual making of a motion picture, the shooting, cutting and titling, should be the simplest features of its production, easy things done efficiently. If the picture is to be released in seven reels there should not be more than seven hundred feet of excess footage when it is cut to its final form. I am aware that this statement will be received with loud laughter by executives and directors, loud laughter that bespeaks vacant minds. "How can we do it?" they will demand. They can't. I never even intimated that they could. No system is efficient of itself. It must be applied efficiently by people who understand it. Such people some day will be making our pictures. They will be people who understand that the business of the screen is the very simple one of telling stories, not of producing plays. They will take all the time they need to prepare their stories. They will know the story value of every scene and just the number of feet of film each scene will consume. The first draft of each story will contain all the things that now eat up the stockholders' millions-the unused sets and superfluous scenes. But the extravagances that remain on the cutting-room floor to-day will be eliminated from the script to-morrow. When the script is turned over to the director it will be a perfect picture on paper, and it will be a simple matter for the director to transfer it perfectly to the screen. It will be so perfect that it will be inspiration-proof, and there will not be more than ten per cent. excess footage when shooting ends. I do not mean that each perfect picture will be a success. Many books perfectly written and many plays perfectly constructed fail to catch the fancy of the public. That is a hazard of the business. The people who control production now are under the insane impression that the present weird method of making pictures can not be improved. There is not one of them who will not tell you that waste can not be eradicated. I say it can, and to prove it all I need do is to take the doubter over to "poverty row" and show him some instances of pictures being made as I say they should be made. The little fellows make them that way because they have not enough money to make them as the big fellows do. The big producing organizations are money drunk. When they sober up they will have some regard for their stockholders, and this regard will manifest itself in story preparation. They could reform to-day if they wished to reform. But the debauch will continue because the debauchees have deluded the stockholders into the belief that it is a normal condition. But it will not continue much longer. Money is not in the habit of indulging in prolonged naps.

How Not to Make a **Motion Picture**

HE artistic emancipation of the screen waits upon its economic reformation, for perfect examples of screen art can be produced only by following perfect scripts. I have told you that two ensemble scenes were eliminated from pictures on my suggestion. No scene that belongs in a picture can be cut out of it without harming the picture. I advocated the elimination of the scenes because their elimination would harm the pictures less than their retention would harm them. If the stories for the pictures had been prepared properly the fact that these scenes were not needed would have become apparent at some stage of the development of the continuity. They would have been eliminated then, thus saving many thousands of dollars to the stockholders of the producing companies. But the much more important thing, the thing I am interested in, is that the pictures would have been better ones if the scripts had not contained anything that later had to be cut. Producers tell us that the only way to make a picture is to shoot everything that might get a place in it and then build the story in the cutting-room. That is exactly the way a motion picture should not be made. It is a crazy system both artistically and economically. The place to build a story is in the script. To support this argument I refer you to the great majority of pictures that are made the other way. They bear witness to the fact that the manner in which they are made must be wrong. "You must not curb our inspirations," cry the directors. Well, we are not curbing them now, and see what we get. Of course we get some good ones, perhaps one out of each fifty, for some stories have the inherent strength to rise above the manhandling they receive. The King of Kings is a good example of the standard method of making pictures. When shooting was completed I am told that there were something like sixty reels of story. When it was cut for release there was no story. It is advertised as a picture that cost over two million dollars to make. What the public sees probably cost less than a fifth of that amount. The rest is absolute and unwarranted waste, an economic folly that produced an artistic failure. I see by the papers that the De Mille organization announces that it will make four more pictures at a total cost of ten million dollars. Always money! If it be true, it is a crazy adventure. If the organization has its four stories, which I doubt, how

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does it know it will cost that much to make them into pictures? Henry Ford announces a new car which he says he will manufacture as inexpensively as possible. De Mille announces new pictures which he says he will manufacture as extravagantly as possible. The extravagance is the only recommendation which his press agents give them. All Hollywood knows that even if De Mille did spend the ten million dollars, not more than two millions of it will reach the screen, and that the chances are that we will get four very indifferent pictures. If he would take his four stories, forget all about money, prepare them thoroughly and shoot only what will appear on the screen, he would save eight of his ten millions and give us better pictures. Too much money has harmed more pictures than too little money has. If only half a million dollars, instead of over two millions, had been spent on Old Ironsides we would have been given a better picture than we got. This "shoot anything" policy because there is money enough to pay for it, is the most glaring manifestation of the utter imbecility of the motion picture industry. "Perfect scripts" should be the policy. Producers and directors will tell you that we never can have perfect scripts. No insane thing that the industry has done is half so insane as the idea it holds that it can not do better. Perfect plans from which to make pictures are no more impossible than perfect plans from which to build bridges.

Writers Should Blow Off the Lid

THEN it is recognized that making motion pictures is the business of writers there will be a vast increase in the number of meritorious pictures. No other organizations on earth had as many able writers on its pay-roll as M.-G.-M. has had for the past year. Yet not one of these writers had any authority on the lot. At any given time at least half of them were loafing because the production heads did not know how to use them. The organization holds the view that directors are the big people on the lot. The result of the adherence to such belief is a succession of pictures so lacking in ordinary sense that the shelves are being crowded, and desperate efforts are being made to put other productions into shape for release, in the hope that they will return the money spent on them. If Metro had thought more about its writers and less about its directors it would not have so many failures on its hands. If it had understood what kind of business it is in it would have started a long time ago to nurse writers along until they were producing scripts that anyone could direct. But it has ignored the writers. The crowning insult came a few weeks ago when the writers were herded into a projection-room and soundly roasted by Irving Thalberg and Harry Rapf for not doing better work. Both Thalberg and Rapf were fair enough to say that part of the blame was theirs because they could not find time to direct properly the assignments of writers. All the blame is theirs. If they were competent executives they would be organized so that they could realize a profit on every dollar their company pays in salaries. That is what executives are for. The competent executive hires only men who can do their jobs better than he could, a principle that is in the A B C's of business. But it is a principle that is not recognized in the motion

picture business. There is not an executive in any studio in Hollywood who does not believe that he knows more than any author on earth does about story values. Authors should be the big men of the industry, should be getting the big money. If they were not a lot of silly asses such would be their status. Not because I am interested in them, but because I am interested in better pictures, I would suggest that as the heads of the industry hold writers in such small regard, they should be given an opportunity to see how they could get along without any. United into a solid organization screen writers would have the industry at their mercy. They could wipe out all the insults they have suffered and make themselves rich. The weapon is at hand. The Authors' League and the league of dramatists-I don't know the name of the organization-are in a position to-day to dictate to the producers of stage plays, holding their power securely because they exercise it wisely. It would be a simple matter to extend the activities of these organizations to embrace the work of those who write for the screen. Those who are sincere in their desire to follow screen writing as a career should be receptive to such a move. Surely they have stood all they intend to from those who now rule their destinies. If they should join forces with those who write for the stage they would be inaugurating a movement of importance to all the world, for all the world goes to the cinema and is interested in any step that will improve the quality of the entertainment provided for it. Capturing the industry would not be purely a piratical exploit on the part of the writers. They could lick their chops and have a devil of a lot of fun in making their raid, but they could solace any consciences that might be among them with the thought that they would be launching the greatest movement for its uplift that the screen has experienced.

"Service for Ladies" Is All to the Good

DELIGHTFUL picture is Service for Ladies, Adolphe Menjou's latest, not yet released. It introduces a new director in the person of Harry d' Arrast, and a charming new leading woman in the person of Catharine Carver, a beautiful girl with an alluring screen personality. D' Arrast is the director who got the goats of everyone connected with the picture, from Ben Schulberg down, by wandering onto the set anywhere from one to three hours after everybody else was ready to go to work, and wandering off it before anybody else was ready to quit. It was his first picture and there was a feeling on the lot that he might have been a bit more humble about it. But for all his eccentricities he's made good and given Paramount one of the best pictures it has had to release in a long time. It presents Adolphe as a headwaiter, and I was glad to see that he makes a much better headwaiter than he did a barber in another picture a year or so ago. He gives a capital performance. I always have liked him, but never quite as much as I do in Service for Ladies. The story deals with a man as humble as a maitre d' hotel falling in love with the daughter of an American railroad king. As a matter of fact, maitres d'hotel are not humble. No king is quite so aristocratic as the man who snaps his fingers at the waiters who serve the royal table. "You must come from quite a family

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of chefs," I remarked to the maitre d' hotel of the Cecil Hotel in London, after he had told me that his grandfather had made the first ice and served it to Napoleon. "Sir," he responded, with extraordinary dignity, "I come from a dynasty of chefs!" Such a maitre d' hotel is Adolphe in this picture. However, the social gap between the waiter and the American princess is good story material and Ernest Vajda and Benjamin Glazer have written a decidedly clever story with it for a theme, and Chandler Sprague prepared it most acceptably for the screen. Awed, perhaps, by the superb independence of the director, George Marion Jr. was subdued into writing quite ordinary titles, which are exactly the kind the picture should have. D' Arrast's direction is splendid. He shows the best of taste all the way through and makes the foreign atmosphere convincing. I think he overdoes the activities of the waiters in his Parisian restaurant, not quite catching the restfulness and lack of bustle you find over there, but it is a small matter, and perhaps D' Arrast and I have not patronized the same Parisian restaurants. That perfect acting that gives no evidence of being acting, characterizes the whole picture. Paramount has given it a very fine production, the scenes showing winter sports in the mountains of Switzerland being particularly effective. A very creditable performance is given by Lawrence Grant, who plays the part of a king who is one of the maitre d' hotel's patrons. He is incognito in all his scenes, but shining through his democracy there is always a suggestion of his kingly dignity. It is a delightful characterization. James Marcus is another artist who scores heavily. Nickolas Soussanin appears in but one scene and again impressed me with his ability as an actor. I have seen him on the screen but three times, have never seen him off it, and don't know who he is or where he came from, but I am willing to go on record as holding the opinion that he is a truly great screen actor. Some day some producer will have sense enough to give him a smashing big part and he will prove to be another big box office bet. Miss Carver is new to me, as I can not remember having seen her on the screen before. She combines an air of refinement with a sense of humor and naturalness and is a valuable addition to that very small circle of our screen girls who are convincing in sophisticated parts.

Problem of How to End the Story

HE story of Service for Ladies is interesting and intriguing. Albert, the maitre d' hotel, does not allow Elizabeth, the wealthy American girl, to learn that he is a waiter. He follows her to Switzerland and there encounters the king, who treats him as affably as cosmopolitans always treat their favorite waiters. Albert is planted as being the greatest maitre d' hotel in Europe, and there is nothing unkingly in the royal cordiality. The girl witnesses the friendly relations that exist between the waiter and the king and naturally assumes that the former must be a person of social distinction. But there is no evidence that she falls in love with him on that account. She merely is a charming American girl, not a tuft-hunter. The king becomes aware of the growing romance, but is too much a sport to give Albert away, and he is too much a king to let the girl be fooled. He

puts Albert in his place in a splendid little scene. On their first meeting the king had given Albert a cigar from his case. In the scene in question the king again produces the case, but takes from it only one cigar, which he puts between his own lips, and demands a light from the waiter. "I think I like you better as a waiter," says the king as he strolls away. This does not deter Albert from proposing, but later it does work into his conscience enough to make him run away from the girl after she has accepted him, and return to his restaurant. When the authors got this far with the story undoubtedly they wrinkled their eyebrows over the problem of how to end it. Would they let the waiter marry the girl, bridging the very wide social gap, or would they end the story as nine times out of ten it would end in real life, by the renunciation of the love? Adolphe plays the waiter so well that we do not forget that he is a waiter, and Miss Carver plays her part so well that we do not forget that she is an American aristocrat. My personal opinion at this stage of the story was that such a girl would not marry a waiter, for their worlds were too far apart, and she would have sense enough to know that such a union held little prospect of being a happy one. But would the great American public like such an ending? That was the studio problem, and it would have been mine if I had been producing the picture. The studio solved it by bringing the girl to Albert's restaurant after the separation and reuniting the lovers, the king being on hand, as principal stockholder in the hotel, to raise Albert to the dignity of managing director. I would have solved it in another way. Albert, strong in his determination to be true to his renunciation, meets the girl and her father at the entrance to the restaurant and escorts them to their table. It is the girl's first knowledge of the status of the man she loves, and makes a dramatic scene. I would have had Albert turn from her table, to be stopped by the king, who would have produced his case and given Albert a cigar. And on that incident I would have faded out. I believe it would have been a more effective ending, and it certainly would have been a logical one. "But," Paramount will say, "we make pictures to make money, and unless they are popular they won't make money. Those who support pictures want to see the lovers united, consequently we make the ending a happy one." But I believe that Paramount bases its argument on a faulty premise. It has a wrong conception of the Great American Shopgirl, whom it strives to please. It thinks she would like to see the heiress marry the waiter. In reality our Shopgirl is our greatest snob. She will want to see the waiter put in his place. The ending of Service for Ladies is its weakest point. Of course the so-called "unhappy" ending will be put on the foreign prints, but even in this country I am satisfied that the picture would do better with the logical ending. Certainly it would make a greater appeal to people of intelligence.

"The Rough Riders" Misses a Big Chance

PARAMOUNT has taken a first rate president and made him the central character of a picture that is second rate entertainment and third rate history. The Rough Riders might have been a notable picture. Roosevelt was our most dramatic president, as well as one of

our most revered. If this picture were our only record of him, he would have no place in history. It cheapens him. It takes liberities with him which those who cherish his memory will resent. Hermann Hagedorn is credited with the story. Roosevelt recorded in print his respect and admiration for Hagedorn, and Hagedorn, in his several works dealing with phases of the life of his friend, whose official biographer he became, reveals the affection he had for the dynamic president, whom he treats with dignity and with a true appreciation of his place in American history. I refuse to believe that a man who regards the late president as Hagedorn does could have written the story of The Rough Riders. Undoubtedly most of what he wrote rested in that Valhalla of murdered literary inspirations, the cutting-room. Since viewing the picture I can understand why all the Roosevelt organizations and the Rough Riders will have none of it. Paramount has repeated what it did with Old Ironsides; it has taken a glorious page out of American history and messed it up, achieving nothing, and spoiling it for others who might have proved equal to it. There are some impressive shots in the picture, the one showing a whole regiment of horses beginning to buck at once being one of the most exhilirating scenes I ever saw on the screen; but of the greatness of Roosevelt or the tragedy of war or the drama of the liberation of Cuba there is nothing. Roosevelt's presence in the picture is of value only for what we know of him and not for what he does in it. No moment in a war is as dramatic as the moment when it begins. In this picture it begins in a title and no one who appears on the screen is shown as having anything to do with beginning it, although we have sequences showing what led up to it. The birth of the Rough Riders is handled without any appreciation of the drama that might have been injected into it. We are shown a few telegrams and then the assembled battalion springs into view on the screen. I longed for one shot of a lonely cow puncher in North Dakota picking up a paper containing Roosevelt's call to armsfor anything that would have impressed me with the drama of the response to the call as a tribute to the man who made it. Paramount overlooked all such opportunities and gives us a lot of farcical movie characters who make a lark out of a serious moment in our history. The raising of the Rough Riders was a tremendous tribute to Roosevelt as well as a highly dramatic episode in the Spanish-American war, but neither the personal element nor the dramatic value was brought out. Nor was the war itself dramatized. It is not a story of the war, for it shows but one incident of it; it is not a story of Roosevelt because it gives a false impression of him; it is not a story of the Rough Riders because there are too many other elements in it. In fact, I don't know how to classify it accept as just another movie. Let us appraise it from that angle.

Probably Was Edited to Death

THE Rough Riders, as a motion picture, clearly was edited to death. As shown it is a succession of unrelated episodes. It does not possess that continuity of thought that every picture must have to be a credit to screen art. It is elemental in its weaknesses, possessing faults that one would expect the rawest amateurs at

picture-making to avoid. It contains many decidedly clever gags, at which I laughed most heartily, and they appeared with a frequency that makes the picture more of a farce than anything else. Roosevelt seems to be in it chiefly in the capacity of a press agent for it. The gags are unrelated to the story, as is quite allowable in a farce. but which is out of place in a historical drama, which, in theory at least, this picture must be. A funny sequence is that which shows a whole company pursuing Mary Astor. It would have been ten times as funny if it had been handled properly. It received just the standard movie treatment, which means that it never could have occurred in real life. It is cheap farce, and it might have been clever comedy. Charley Farrell's characterization was inconsistent from the first. Undoubtedly the idea of the story was to reflect in him the virtues we look for in our heroes. As we see him he is an ill-bred smart Alec, lacking in all the gentlemanly qualities that the manner of his arrival in camp would indicate he must have possessed. Had he pursued Mary Astor with some degree of subtlety it could have been still funnier and at the same time consistent with his status as a hero. If he had displayed some subtlety in leading his company on the trail of Mary, doing it in a way that would have left her until the last moment ignorant of the fact that she was being pursued by the company, and which would have kept the company from knowing that it was pursuing her, Farrell himself being the sole custodian of the secret, the sequence would have been infinitely richer in comedy value. At least twice too much footage is devoted to Farrell carrying the lamented Charlie Mack to the hospital tent. It loses most of its drama. The picture is blighted with the close-up curse, and the close-ups themselves are not handled intelligently. If we must have individual closeups of two people standing together, each should not occupy the mathematical center of the screen. There should be some suggestion of the continued presence of the character eliminated by the close-up, such as an arm and shoulder showing. The lighting of most of the closeups is flat and white, not corresponding with the lighting of the medium shots. There is a scene in which clouds are printed in. It is done unconvincingly, the clouds not matching the lighting of the scene or its mood. Mary Astor's hat is dropped from the carriage in which she is riding with Farrell. She accompanies him when he goes back for it only because Victor Fleming, the director, told her to. It is impossible to conceive of her doing it for any other reason. There is a scene showing a photographer making photos of the soldiers. The style of camera he uses was not manufactured until some years after the

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period of the picture. By long odds the best feature of The Rough Riders is the set of titles written by George Marion Jr. They are brilliant. They possess the merit of indulging in wise-cracks without departing from the spirit of the picture. The serious titles have high literary merit and all of them are punctuated properly, which is quite a refreshing departure, although Paramount of late has given us some other examples of the correct use of punctuation marks. It may be just a coincidence that this evidence of reform has been apparent only since The Spectator began a campaign against ignorant punctuation.

Putting in Things That Don't Belong

RT, like beauty, is absolute. It is its own reason for being. If perfect, it can prompt no question that it itself does not answer. Each sequence in a motion picture is a separate artistic creation. It can not be perfect unless it be complete, unless it prompts no question that it itself does not answer. There is a sequence in The Rough Riders that does not conform to this elemental rule. It prompts the question, "Why?" and does not answer it. Mary Astor bakes two cakes, one for Farrell, the other for Mack, and promises to take them to the train that is to start the soldiers on their journey from San Antonio to Cuba. A spoken title by the cook at Mary's home plants the fact that Mary is not much of a cake-maker. With her cakes in her arm Mary boards a trolley car, the power goes off and she arrives at the depot too late to deliver the cakes to the two young men. It is a long sequence, there being shots of Mary's journey and of scenes at the depot. There are perhaps a couple of thousand people in the latter scenes. The sequence ends with the train disappearing in the distance and the tearful Mary, the cakes under her arm, watching it disappear. I have no idea why it is in the picture. It does not advance the story, has no particular production value, and there is no acting in it to excuse its presence. It ties up with nothing that comes after it, and appears to me to be nothing but a stupid bit of editing. It is too bad that so much footage must be devoted to a valueless sequence and so much story value left on the cutting-room floor, as undoubtedly was the case with this picture. To the credit of The Rough Riders stand several notable performances. I do not approve of Farrell's characterization, but I approve highly of the manner in which he depicts it. I can not conceive of any well-bred young man making himself so obnoxious to an obviously refined girl. He should have sense enough to know that she could not be won that way. In the Cuban sequences Farrell is much better. All the way through the picture he displays the same charming screen personality that makes him so appealing in Seventh Heaven. He is equally at home in depicting gaiety and pathos, and should go a long way in motion pictures. George Bancroft is a capital comedian because he is a capable actor. His performance in this picture is in strong contrast to his part of a heavy in White Gold, but he handles both characterizations with the same degree of understanding and sincerity. I wish Fleming had toned down Noah Beery's sheriff a little. If he had been less of a low comedy sheriff it would have given Bancroft's comedy more value. The peculiar thing about the performances of Bancroft and Beery is that

while they are outstanding features of the picture they have nothing to do with anything else in it, which is one of the many weaknesses of the picture from the standpoint of story construction. Mary Astor is just the girl for the part she played. I never have seen her look more beautiful, and she backed up her beauty with entirely satisfactory acting. Fleming handled the charge up San Juan hill splendidly, although Roosevelt is shown as having little more to do with it than I had. It was a clever idea to make the inception of the charge the moment when Mack overcomes his cowardice. The way the soldiers sweep into line behind him as he advances recklessly is inspiring. As the picture failed of its status as one of the outstanding productions of all time, it might be a good idea for Paramount to re-edit it. Surely there was enough material shot to make a good picture if it were edited intelligently. It is too bad to see such a fine opportunity missed.

Excellent Acting In "Small Bachelor"

ERHAPS I would not have been so severe in criticizing American pictures for lacking even performances, as I did in the review of Aftermath, if I had known when I wrote it that I was so soon to see one of our own pictures that contained nothing but excellent acting. It is The Small Bachelor, directed by William Seiter for Universal. In the cast are Barbara Kent, Andre Beranger, Vera Lewis, Lucien Littlefield, Ned Sparks, Gertrude Astor, William Austin, and George Davis. It is a comedy with a strong bearing towards farce in many scenes, and is one of the brightest, most amusing and entertaining pictures I have seen recently. Bill Seiter, who had so much to do with making Reg Denny popular, is very happy in his treatment of light comedy. He has a deft touch and a lively sense of humor. In this picture he is at his best. I saw it before it was cut finally and in its finished form no doubt it will be lacking in some of the weaknesses that it then contained. The first encounter between Barbara Kent and Beranger, the leads, was shown in closeups, for which I understand a medium shot has been substituted, as it should be. I have no fault to find with the direction of any of the scenes, nor with the manner in which the story is told. It moves along briskly and I predict that its screening will be accompanied by an almost continuous ripple of merriment. I have named eight members of the cast. Each of them gives a perfect performance, and it is not often that we have eight good performances in one picture. The combination of a fat and

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sympathetic part and Littlefield's ability as an actor gives him the picture. He is delightful as an old man who has never been farther west than the Hudson, but who just dotes on cowboys. Beranger has perhaps the most difficult part, but is equal to it. He is one of our finest actors, literally an artist to his finger-tips, for he has an expressive pair of hands and knows how to use them. Also he is adept at putting over points with only the slightest changes in his facial expression. A scene in which he and Littlefield, both posing as bold westerners, take huge chews of tobacco, is extremely funny. Gertrude Astor never fails to give a satisfactory performance. In this picture she tells Bill Austin that she has three children, that they are thin on account of a lack of proper nourishment, and that she takes in washing, and she tells it all in pantomime, so well done that her meaning is plain. Austin gives another of his clever character delineations, a little gem of a performance that makes a big contribution to the picture. Vera Lewis is capital. It is a relief to see her in a part that is not altogether heavy. It comes as quite a surprise to see her laughing heartily. I don't think that I ever saw Ned Sparks do better than he does in The Small Bachelor, and George Davis, familiar in two-reelers, contributes a lot of excellent comedy. Barbara Kent is a young girl with a charming screen personality, and with a little more experience should take her place among our most popular featured players. Tom Reed wrote a very clever set of titles. I believe this picture marks his debut in the capacity of title writer, and it is an auspicious beginning. Other producers should take a leaf out of Universal's book and strive for even productions by casting real actors in all the parts, not in just the leading ones and leaving the others to be played by people who can not give as capable performances as the high-salaried headliners. I am confident The Small Bachelor will be highly successful because of the sensible casting combined with intelligent direction.

"Love of Sunya" Faults Are Basic

NE does not have to strain himself mentally to decide what is the matter with The Love of Sunya, Gloria Swanson's first picture for United Artists. It has two fundamental weaknesses. Most of the action has an air of unreality because it depicts what the principal character sees in a crystal globe, and the love story includes a girl who seriously considers turning her back on the man she loves and marrying another for money. Neither of these features of the story is good screen material. Gloria does some really satisfactory acting in the opera-singer sequence, but we know it is something that did not take place, that her mind is in a trance, and that shortly we will see her in her home again, consequently our sympathy is not aroused by her suffering, for we know that the suffering is not real, that it is something that might be caused by something that we're pretty sure is not going to happen. I'm not much given to crystalgazing, and have no great confidence in the infallibility of a ball of glass as a prophet, therefore I took no stock in anything that Gloria saw in the one upon which she centered her gaze. Not being interested in the things the crystal told, I was not at all interested in the degree of art Gloria displayed in interpreting them. Cosmo Hamilton's ponderous titles endeavored to plant some deep thought in connection with the seance, but I refused to accept the profundity of a philosophy that leaned on the gleaming surface of a crystal ball. Then take the love story. On the screen and in our literature the heroine must marry the man she loves. If she hesitate a moment she is not the standard model heroine. Money is a base substitute for love, an ignoble consideration. I am aware that good drama can be built on the girl marrying the wrong man if some powerful reason why she should do so be established, but I refuse to be impressed by a girl in a luxurious home, whose father is still rich enough to throw a big party, taking seriously the father's suggestion that she spurn the man she loves and marry another merely because he has money enough to take up the father's notes at a bank. And I would despise a father who would urge such a sacrifice. Yet the picture asked me to sympathize with such a daughter and such a father. I couldn't do it. Perhaps better treatment would have made the whole thing plausible, but Albert Parker's direction exposed to view all the weaknesses of the story. When someone made The Eyes of Youth from the same story some years ago he gave us an infinitely better picture than Parker has given us. When Miss Swanson determined to produce this tricky story as her first United Artists venture she should have secured the services of the director who already had handled it successfully. However, The Love of Sunya has a great deal to its credit, chief of which is the really excellent performance of the star. Gloria Swanson is an artist. She is capable of great things, and I do not think she ever will find a role too big for her. I have great respect for her ability and I hope she will be fortunate enough to find stories worthy of it. But I would advise her to keep all freaks out of her entourage. No doubt by the expenditure of a large sum of money she secured Cosmo Hamilton to write the titles for The Love of Sunya. He was not content with writing rather ridiculous ones, but apparently he determined to show us goofs just how our language should be presented on the screen. He scorned quotation marks to indicate spoken titles and disregarded all other rules of punctuation. Why Miss Swanson should put this weird load on an already weak story I can not understand. Good titles would have helped the picture. Hamilton's harmed it.

Elemental Faults In "See You in Jail"

AY ROCKETT is improving as a supervisor. In See You in Jail he gives us a picture that is not so plastered with close-ups that we can't see it. Joe Henabery directed it. His principal weakness is having all the characters in all the scenes facing the camera. All his crowds are one-sided. The character who in real life would be the center of a crowd is the middle man in a straight line, and speaks over his shoulder to those behind him. There is not one natural grouping in the picture. I do not understand how a director can commit repeatedly such a stupid blunder. When characters walk into a scene and turn to face the camera before speaking, the scene loses all the sincerity that intelligent direction would give it. When the directors of a company are urging the president to do something they do not stand behind him. They surround him, and a photograph

of the action would show the backs of some of them. The story of See You in Jail is an amusing one, and Gerald Duffy wrote a scenario from which a better picture should have been made. Jack Mulhall impersonates a famous financier who has been arrested for speeding. He is sentenced to jail in place of the man whom he impersonates, and there is an insert of a newspaper story relating that 'the millionaire is serving time. Jack's photograph illustrates the story. It's a funny thing the public was not acquainted with the famous man sufficiently to recognize that Jack's features did not resemble his. It is a gratuitous error, for there was no reason why the photograph should be in the paper. It is another one of those things that "nobody will notice." There are two inserts of letters written by two different people. The handwriting in both is identical, and it is striking handwriting that would arrest the attention of the most unobservant viewer. All the mistakes are so elemental that it is surprising that they should find their way into a picture produced by such an organization as First National. It would be interesting to know if First National got mad at John McCormick because he permitted such blunders, or if he got mad at First National because he could not prevent them. If the person responsible for them is still on the lot, First National should hire some grammar school kid as his assistant to see that there are no more such obvious blunders. One thing, though, that First National deserves credit for in connection with See You in Jail is the casting. They surrounded Jack Mulhall with real troupers. Mack Swain and Craufurd Kent give very good performances, and William Orlamond provides a lot of clever comedy. The group that forms Jack's fellow culprits in jail is made up of people who look the parts and also act them convincingly. All their faces are familiar, but Charles Clary is the only one I know. Mulhall keeps up the stride he has attained during the past year. The way he has come on as a light comedian is surprising. Alice Day is a captivating heroine. The titles are responsible for a lot of laughs. It is a picture that permits of humor in its titles and Dwinelle Benthall and Rufus McCosh have injected a lot of it. I refuse to believe that people who can write such clever titles would punctuate them so poorly. Every punctuation crime that could be committed is repeated time and again. Apparently the person who types First National titles for photographing thinks that intelligent punctuation is an affectation. See You in Jail could have been a comedy that would have amused everyone, but it is so crowded with little things indicating that a low order of mentality engaged in its making that it is a production that as a whole reflects no credit on the organization responsible for it.

This Story Is Not Convincing

HEN King Baggot directed The Notorious Lady he was handicapped by an unconvincing story. He could not escape making just a movie out of it. He made it an exceedingly interesting picture from a production standpoint, and Tony Gaudio's fine camera work made it a pictorial treat, but as a piece of screen literature it has little to recommend it. Barbara Bedford visits Lloyd Whitlock's apartment to ask him to cease persecuting her. Lewis Stone, her husband, follows her there.



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Whitlock pulls a gun and in the ensuing struggle is killed. Stone is convicted of murder because the jury does not believe Barbara's version of the shooting. That is the main premise of the story, the thing that must be convincing to give the story any value and to lend interest to the ensuing action. Barbara and Stone are the only surviving witnesses of the struggle. Stone is discovered with the gun in his hand, the dead body at his feet. It is Whitlock's gun. It should not have been difficult to establish that fact in court. If the jury did not believe Barbara's testimony to the effect that her husband was innocent, whose testimony did they believe in finding him guilty? There were no other witnesses. The verdict is illogical, damning the whole picture at the outset. It was necessary to the story that Stone should be found guilty at his first trial, but the screen has no license to let that fact substitue for probability in finding him guilty. All we see of the trial is the court room just before the jury enters, and the reading of the verdict. Baggot handles the sequence splendidly, building up the suspense in a compelling way. But he falls down when the verdict is read. I never yet have been found guilty of murder, but I imagine that if I were I would get an awful jolt. In my newspaper days I reported many murder trials and the defendant's reaction to a verdict of guilty always was the high point of my story. Stone does not react at all. If I had been directing the scene I would have made his face acquaint the audience with the purport of the verdict. Later in the picture Stone causes a report to reach his friends that he is dead. Barbara visits the hamlet in South Africa where he is living. She thinks he is dead and he does not know that she is on the same continent with him. Baggot teases his audience by repeatedly having the two almost discover one another, but not doing it until much farther along in the picture. It is too obvious and is unconvincing. Ann Rork loves Stone, but when she quite conveniently overhears a plot to kill him she refrains from warning him until it is too late to ward off the attack. More movie stuff. In real life the girl would have gone right to him as soon as she knew he was in danger. In the first sequence in the picture there is an example of the lack of relationship between a spoken title and the action, something that is quite common. Barbara tells Whitlock that she despises him, but she is as composed about it as if she were asking him the time. Whatever the script title was, it was something far removed from what Gerald Duffy wrote in the title. We will get perfect titles only when the script titles reach the screen. The close-up curse is virulent in this picture and spoils many scenes. Earl Metcalfe is introduced in a

ALFRED HUSTWICK

FILM EDITOR AND TITLE WRITER

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close-up, smiling urbanely at someone. There are several cuts to him doing it, but it is not established whom he is smiling at, or why. Barbara Bedford gives an excellent performance in The Notorious Lady. For a long time she has been one of my favorites. Stone reveals himself as the fine actor we know him to be. Although I found much in the picture to quarrel with, I must admit that I found it interesting.

Miss Leatrice Joy and Donald Crisp

EATRICE JOY is quite delightful in Vanity. Her part is not one of the so common "look pleasant, please" variety. There is a definite thought behind it. She has to show that she is a vain little fool, and while doing it she must retain the sympathy of the audience. Assisted by the able screen story written by Douglas Doty and the capable direction of Donald Crisp, Miss Joy gives a thoughtful and convincing performance that raises my estimate of her abilities as an actress. The part fits her as neatly as one of the gowns she wears so well. I feel like thanking someone for not adding smoking and cocktail drinking to her list of vices. The story is about vanity, and Crisp did not complicate her characterization by depicting her possessing habits that had nothing to do with the theme. As I see the picture, it is a director's triumph, for it could so easily have been made just another impossible movie. The idea of a nice girl accompanying a rough sea captain aboard his ship rather late at night is ridiculous material for a motion picture, and I'm willing to bet that Donald Crisp wrinkled his brows over the problem of doing it in a way that would make it look reasonable. He succeeds admirably, proving again that you can do anything on the screen if you have brains enough to do it properly. But I have one quarrel with

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Donald. Leatrice has to shoot a goofy cook before she can make her escape from the ship. Of course that is enough to play the devil with any girl's nerves. But this girl is our heroine and we look to her to stand the gaff like a heroine. Donald makes her wobble all over the place while she is on the way to the altar, and act like an almost dead person while she is being married. Apparently no one notices that there is anything the matter with her, which is bad in itself, for the people in such a scene always should react to what is being planted for the benefit of the audience. I would have made her stand up straight and march to the altar like a champion; but first I would have shown her alone in her room, waging a great battle with herself for the composure of her nerves, and winning. This would have made her somewhat heroic in the wedding sequence. A pleasing touch, pleasantly reminiscent of the spirit that prevailed on Armistice Day, is given when Leatrice, who previously had not conceded that servants are human beings, locks arms with the butler and the cook and cuts capers with them when word comes that the war is over. It is one of the several directorial gems that sparkle along the course of the picture. The sets are preposterous. I thought Cecil de Mille had got over his penchant for vulgar opulence; or perhaps this is a new outbreak, terrible boudoirs taking the place of horrible bathrooms. I imagine that the idea back of these sets was that they would feed the vanity of anyone living in them. They would be more apt to drive anyone crazy. Once when Charlie Ray entered the grand splash down stairs-I have no idea what sort of a room it is supposed to be-he must have thought he still was outdoors, for he plays a long love scene with Leatrice without removing his hat. In another love scene with her in which hand-holding has its part, he wears his gloves. It made me wonder if undertakers make love that way. It was a pleasure to see Alan Hale on the screen again. His performance in Vanity is a really excellent one. He should subdue his yearnings to be a director and stick to the thing he does better. Ray had little to do in this picture. I suppose all his good scenes remained in the cutting-room. I was appalled to see how fat he looks in a uniform. John Kraff's titles were written well enough, but punctuated with the usual De Mille organization's disregard for education.

This Story Built on Wrong Premise

MILLION BID attracted me to a picture house because I wanted to give Michael Curtiz a chance to please me. I did not like his Third Degree, which I believe is the first picture he made in this country, as there were so many weird shots in it that in my review I called it a "photographic orgy". He is milder in A Million Bid, but was given such a highly ridiculous story that he had no chance to make an entertaining picture. He handles one retrospect effectively. Malcolm McGregor is in a moving train, mentally reviewing his courtship of Dolores Costello. The love scenes are superimposed on the one showing him in the train; and while the former are the more distinct we do not lose sight of the man doing the thinking, his picture remaining as a dim background for the others. Another shot has not so much to recommend it. Warner Oland stands with his back to

a fireplace, his arm stretched out on the mantelpiece. Curtiz uses his arm as the upper frame of a shot of Dolores. To get the shot without having her change her position he would have to tear out the mantelpiece to put the camera in position to shoot under the arm, the opening in the fireplace not figuring in the shot. As neither any character in the scene nor the audience could get such a view of Dolores the shot is merely ridiculous, an inexcusable striving for effect. He might just as well have shot her through a hole in the rug. But there is little in the production for which the director can be criticized adversely. He does rather well, but the story is a woeful thing. Dolores marries Oland and the yacht upon which they sail on their wedding night is wrecked. Oland is believed to be lost. Dolores marries McGregor and has three happy years with him. Oland then turns up, his memory gone, and Malcolm, now a famous brain specialist, operates on him. As the story has it the happiness of Dolores and Malcolm will be ruined forever if he recovers his memory, and they take it big. Anyone with common sense would know that there was nothing to worry about. Any court in any country would annul the previous marriage on the showing that could be made, and Dolores and Malcolm could remarry. The big moment comes when Oland, his memory restored, is moved by the evident happiness of the two and denies that he can remember anything of the past, wobbling out of the scene to escape being in the final fadeout. The young people are deliriously happy, apparently being ignorant of the fact that they never were married legally, Dolores still being married to Oland. The wedding ceremony specifies



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"until death do us part" as the duration of a marriage. It does not terminate when one of the contracting parties forgets about it. A picture based on such a wrong premise can not be convincing, and the viewer's knowledge that it is a silly story nullifies the impression good acting would create. The externals of the wreck scene are handled well enough, although I can not understand how great volumes of water can pour over both the port and the starboard sides of a vessel at the same time. The reaction of the characters to the imminence of death by drowning has no sincerity or drama in it. The captain even indulges in a wisecrack, which takes the prize as comedy relief. To strain for a laugh when every agency should be utilized to retain the tensity of a scene is a childish departure from good screen technic. Malcolm McGregor's performance appealed to me more than any other in the production, partly because it is the most consistent, but chiefly because he is so easy and natural. This young man is one of the best leading men we have and I would like to see him get his opportunity in more ambitious pictures. My opinion is that there is no company too fast for him to travel in. Jack Jarmuth's titles in A Million Bid are punctuated with characteristic Warner Brothers inaccuracy.

Here's One That's Quite Dreadful

ON'T Tell the Wife is the pleading title of a Warner Brothers picture. I, for one, won't. If I told her about it I never could drag her out to another Warner production. It is perhaps the silliest picture I ever saw. Rex Taylor supplied the story and Paul Stein directed. The director aggravated the author's sins, and the title writer made a large contribution to the general asininity of the whole thing. The story is laid in Paris and reflects the atmosphere of Burbank. There is not the slightest suggestion of Paris in any reel. When I view such a picture I wonder how it is possible for a studio to commit so many blunders that any ten-year-old boy in an audience can spot. Lilyan Tashman is presented as a French girl. A remark she makes to the guard on a train is recorded in English in a title, as, of course, it should be. "Zis is ze only train to Paris," replies the guard. This leads to the presumption that the French girl must have addressed the French guard in English. Why? If she addressed him in their own language, why did he reply in broken English? Huntly Gordon, presented as a wealthy and sophisticated traveler, gives a guest a cigar. The box shows that it is a cheap American brand. I understand that Stein is a foreigner. He should know that the government monopoly of tobacco in France makes the importation of such cigars prohibitive. William Demarest calls on Irene Rich in the evening and wears a very glad business suit. The first thing that any American sojourning in Europe learns is that he must dress every night. This is particularly true of such capitals as London and Paris. Gordon and Miss Tashman start a flirtation. They kiss one another lingeringly in full view of the dancers in a ballroom, Gordon's wife being one of the dancers. Miss Rich (the wife) wishes to make Huntly jealous. She dashes off a note to herself, signing it "Henry" (Demarest). Huntly finds the note and becomes jealous all right, but does not recognize his wife's handwriting. Lilyan apparently is a wealthy girl living in a luxurious home, but when Huntly calls to take her to a cafe she receives him in her bedroom. While he is there Demarest. her fiancee, calls, and she receives him also in her bedroom, first depositing Huntly in a chest. She does not tell Demarest that she is engaged. She pretends to go to sleep, and he tiptoes out. These are only a part of the utterly impossible scenes I saw in Don't Tell the Wife, and as I walked out on it when it was about half over I presume there were many more that I did not see. The story is the blahest sort of variation of the triangle. Even if it had been given any kind of sensible direction it would have been too trivial to be classed as entertainment. There is something sad in the contemplation of the expenditure of all the money that it took to make it. To entice people to pay to see it on the strength of the names in the cast is a cheap swindle. If a mercantile house advertised such shoddy goods as Warner Brothers advertise this silly drivel the law would proceed against it for perpetrating a fraud. Such a picture harms the whole film industry. and for their own protection producers should try to figure out some plan by which productions should be rated, in order that such a one as Don't Tell the Wife could be placed at the bottom of the list. Of course I know that no such plan is feasible, but something ought to be done about it. Jack Warner should be ashamed of himself.

I would like to apply for membership in the Society of Those Who Discovered Janet Gaynor. To qualify I present a sentence from my review of The Return of Peter Grimm, which appeared in The Spectator of January 8: "I never saw Janet Gaynor before, and do not know what other performances she has to her credit, but if her work in this picture is a fair sample of her wares, she is a young woman who gives promise of developing into something worth while."

"Variety" predicts that The King of Kings will run for one year and a half at Grauman's Chinese Theatre. Let's all make guesses. Mine is that the De Mille picture will have a run of not much over six months.

빯

"Who knows what may be slumbering in the background of time?" thunders Cosmo Hamilton in one of his terrific titles in The Love of Sunya. Well, go on. I'll bite. Who?

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CREATIVE PATHS OF THE CINEMA

By Dr. Alexander Arkatov

(The Spectator is happy to avail itself of the opportunity to present to the motion picture industry such a thoughtful study of production prob-lems as the following article which was written by a man who is qualified by experience and ability to discuss the question. Dr. Arkatov formerly was professor of fine arts at the University of Moscow, and dean of the State Motion Picture Academy, also of Moscow. He now is a resident of Hollywood and is a valuable addition to the group of intellectual people who slowly, but surely, are beginning to influence production.)

LREADY Lessing has remarked: A "We have actors, but no actors' art." He referred to the absence in theatrical business of what is fundamentally necessary to every art: firm, unshakable rules, clearly and precisely expressed, on the one hand to guide an actor and ensure his successful progress on the path to perfection, and on the other to give a sure ground for approval or condemnation of the actor.

There are actually no rules. There are certain recommendations, accounted rules, but which are not rules in a strict sense, for they lack what is most important: they do not rest on a law, which in the present case can only be that of nature.

In the actor's art, as in every other, inner impulse, inspiration alone, is not sufficient; it is necessary to be able to obey that inspiration. It is not sufficient to feel; it is necessary to incarnate the feeling. It is not sufficient to experience; it is necessary to be able to display what one has felt.

The actor's art is like all other arts, feeling alone does not suffice. Every art needs its material, no art can be expressed except through the manipulation of material; for if there is no material, the feeling has nothing to contain it. What, indeed, is feeling for, if the body can not express it? Evidently we must not merely feel, but must also know how feelings are expressed. The very deadness of the material in which nature is repro-duced conditions the artist's feelings when he goes into life and not out

of it.
"You can not get nearer," say to

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bronze, the sounds. And the artist

stops—helpless.

"But I will get nearer," says the actor. "I am alive! I, myself, am a part of nature and no limit of approach exists for me." And, indeed, no single art, not even that of the theatre, can approach life so closely as does the given at the sinematograph. as does the cinematograph.

Not even in the most talented paintings, poetry, or music, can we observe life as we can in cinematography. The cinema alone, in the person of moving man, has not yet shown all it can do along the path emerging from life-in rising above the bounds of actuality. Endowed with the most precious of all the means of expression—movement—it can do all that no other art can accomplish. And the cinema actor, subject like every artist to the law of his material, has to subject to that law the mobile material of his living body. Not only the movements in large dimensions (the entrances and exits, the changes

rehearsals before the piece is shot), but the intimate movements of the man himself, the minutest movements of his body, should be produced by him to the complete banishment of everything accidental and unforeseen.

in position of the actors, and in a

word all that a director decides at the

Movement must, like the matter of every art, submit to law and submit to educational form. Let us consider of what the education of movement consists. It is expressed in two qualities: order and judgment. And for this reason. One sees that the movements of the body, as such, are not an end in themselves, for each movement expresses something, and that is why in the training of movement, judgment must accompany order. Here movement is converted into gesture, and the fundamental question of the actor's art presents itself—the training of gesture.

Unfortunately, among our actors, ridicule is almost always aroused when this is mentioned—to such an extent is the opinion common among us that the training of gesture is impossible, or even harmful, and that it leads to artificiality. Actors stub-bornly rebel against order and law, and, of course, do so on the plea of "inspiration". But, I venture to ask, are the arts, other than scenic, devoid of inspiration? Yet they are all subject to law and order. A violinist is not afraid of losing inspiration because he spends hours in learning to control his fingers. The violin and the movements of his fingers are the means through which the musician expresses himself. His body and his movements are the means by which an actor expresses himself.

One asks why should an actor disdain, and even fear, such training as that in which the violinist sees the pledge of his mastery? The musician knows that it is only by submission that inspiration can display itself. But for actors, alas, there is no more detested word than "submission". The extollers of "inspiration" and "intuitiveness" do not understand that art combines law and freedom, and that as law by itself does not form art, so freedom in art, by itself, is not merely insufficient, but is even destructive.

Delsarte gives this definition: "The

body is an instrument. The actor is the instrumentalist. An instrument

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can not play itself, when it is not played upon it will never by itself begin to play." No, it is not life that has to be taken onto the scene, not "intuitiveness"—but nature with all its possibilities. Life and nature are not one and the same thing; life gives only isolated expressions of that of which nature is capable. The wealth of nature must be cultivated, and we must not be satisfied merely by what life offers. We live poorly, we live but little, we do not live fully, and our scanty powers of expression correspond to our feeble receptivity. But we can do more, and we should do more. And what we can do we shall accomplish not by inspiration but only by training ourselves, that is, by training those means of expression with which nature has so generously endowed us, and which we so ungratefully neglect.

Now let us see what an average, present-day cinema actor can give, if he does not possess a keen scent for life, nor what is called "intuitiveness". One has to take into account the exceptional conditions of cinema work, in which an actor is almost always deprived of the possibility of preparing his part in advance, but comes to the studio an hour, or sometimes only a few minutes, before the scene is shot. He perhaps begins to act the piece in the middle, or sometimes at the end. Briefly and hurriedly he becomes acquainted with the outline of the scene to be photographed; goes through it once or twice-there in his costume and make-up-and, if you please, he is ready: take him?

Evidently the actor can not quietly consider his feelings and actions while the piece is being photographed. Critical reflections, self-observations, the analysis of his role, and the bringing out of its psychological nuances—the business of creating the role; the business of rehearsal-is work to be done at home. So what is at the actor's disposal is only the ex-ternal means of depiction—mimicry and gesture. But then it is essential for him to make sure that his movements express what he experiences. The cinema requires special skill in expression; it requires perfection of form; it requires distinctness, com-pression, and clarity. For it often happens that instinctive movementseven if they come as a result of real feeling—may still prove insufficiently perfect, insufficiently formed, and may not fit in with, or suit, the work that is being produced. And, indeed, what can an actor give in such cases, who is not acquainted with the most elementary rules and laws of his own body—considered as an artistic tool for expression—when the whole elo-

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quence, and all the tone of his instrument, are a secret to him?

It is evident, and quite comprehensible, that all his creation, if one may so call it, amounts to a more or less successful improvisation, and thereby he puts a stamp of dilettantism on the whole work.

How can one speak of profound work, or of an actor's sincere creation?

No, the producer must, once for all, reject the casual service of such actors. The producer must form his own corps of artists, who will create specially for the cinema, who will live in its traditions, in its endeavors, in its joys and in its sorrows. This corps of young people needs, I say, a special school. Not a school of manners, but of the science which would furnish them with the knowledge that would teach them the secrets of nature and make it possible for them to master the forms invested in which their natural endowment could attain its true elevation. In the contrary case, what awaits the cinema is to become a home of ignorance and a school of apedom.

Passing to the question of the director's work and his role in the cinema, we would first of all indicate the manifold functions the director fulfils and the series of problems he has to deal

It is known that, beginning with the arrangement of the raw literary material and up to the arrangement of the cutting of the finished picture, all the most important stages of the production of the film are supervised by the director personally and independently. It is comprehensible that such an unusual condition of the director's activity sets him outside any law and beyond any boundary, and the question of a methodical execution of his designs and intentions necessarily disappears. The director here depends chiefly on his imagina-

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tion and invention, and these are inimical to any definite system, or even sometimes to the law of consistency.

In the imagination of the artist-director activity predominates, though often it takes the form of passive fancy, comparable to an accidental discovery. But the whole artistic production is subject to his creative will, The material both of active and passive fantasy are united by the director into an harmonious whole.

In the life before him the artist-director finds chaos. He is surrounded by detached scraps and fragments of the material of life, and the director—in his work of creation—masters life, seeking what supports him, and by his artistic experience expresses both his own feeling of life and his understanding of life. He converts the chaos of actual life into harmony, and in his creation gives some special meaning to the life about him. Therefore the first necessity for a director's creative fancy is the independent activity of his consciousness in the arrangement of the material supplied by his impressions.

Speaking of imagination, I consider that the forms of fancy are made from the material received at some time or other by us from the reality that surrounds us. But I allow myself to think that the real creator can also create from nothing. If the personality of each of us forms one whole with the world, with the universe, then we can feel, guess and comprehend with the unconscious realms of our minds, that which we have never consciously

assimilated.

In this way an artist can, in face of the facts or phenomena new to him,

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grasp those facts or phenomena with the unconscious region of his mind. This purely irrational capacity to feel and realize things without having recourse to elements of previous knowledge, penetrating at once, direct to the absolute reality, is termed intuition. By its aid, through feeling a thing, he comes to the comprehension and explanation of it.

Of course, it is understood that the question of feeling a thing, as such, is only a question of realizing the plan of its presentation—its exterior. With the appearance of an actor on the stage, the imagination of the director should yield place to the actual expression of the physical functions controlling the actor's performance, his creation. Here the director has to enter on a path of artistic education and to concentrate his activity, chiefly, not on what the actor does, but on how he does it.

At the rehearsals before the piece is shot, the director, when explaining the scene to the actor, says: "Feel!" (This replies to the question What?) But it is necessary to indicate to the actor not what he ought to feel, but what he ought to do with his face, or his body. (That will be How.) And in that lies the essence of the matter.

in that lies the essence of the matter.
Who does not know the sufferings that actors often endure when the scene is being shot? The director demands:

"Mr. X, be freer, more unrestrained, more natural."

"But I am natural!"

"No, you are not natural!"

Who is right? Of what does being natural consist? To be natural is the most difficult thing when a man is performing.

And when a scene is being explained, such a dialogue as this often occurs between a director and an octor.

"Mr. X! You are showing indifference, but you ought to display irony!"

"I am expressing irony!"
"But no, you are not expressing it;

you must feel ironical."

"I am feeling ironical!"
"No, you are not feeling ironical."
I do not see that you feel ironical."
"You don't see it; but I feel it!"
"Then show it!"

"I am showing it!"

"No, you are not showing it! . . ."
Who is to blame? Is it true that
the director fails to see it, or is it
true that the actor fails to show it?
I think that if the actor showed it, it
would be apparent. Then why does he
not show it? From what does this
misunderstanding arise? From nothing in particular; but only because in
order to show that the actor should

KARLE KARPE

Advertising Illustrator WEstmore 2558 be able to show it, the director has to show how the feeling can be shown. One has to know how! No feeling, no naturalness, will suffice. So now we see the position of affairs. It has been explained to the actor what he should think, what he should imagine, what he should feel. And the actor really thinks, and imagines, and feels, but the director does not believe it, he does not see it. What is there to be surprised at? Is it possible to see it all? One can only see what another man does, and that is the very thing that has not been shown to the actor.

Here the question again presents itself of which we spoke previously, the question of the education of the corporal forms of expression. One should and must study one's art, because only he is an artist who can master the material of his art, overcome the obstruction of his material. And for the mastery, one has first of all to know one's material and be able to make use of it, in order, when creating, not to have to think how to deal with it.

In conclusion I should like to point out to directors the necessity of clearing the studios of outside and harmful elements. The inclination to "act for the movies", as experience shows, is not always an artistic inclination produced by a store of creative energy seeking to manifest itself in forms of space and time. Too many elements other than that of art attract people to the studio. And, unfortunately, those engaged in the business do not sufficiently oppose the entrance of these others who are not at all drawn there by an artistic impulse. imagine that four-fifths of the actors and actresses with whom I am acquainted do not themselves know why they took up cinema work. In the majority of cases it was probably a semi-conscious endeavor to appear more prominent and important than they had done in the sphere of their former activity. They noted the suc-cess of other actors, the reports in

the press, the adoration of their ad-

All this tempts the schoolboy who has not yet finished his studies, the young lady who is tired of inactivity, the man of means who has an impressive appearance, the lady who has magnificent toilets-and those who simply want to earn something. false attraction of some to the cinema—and the non-resistance to this movement by others, chiefly by the directors—has created such a situation that all our studios are overflowing with people who have no capacity-and no business-to act for the cinema, and who not only lack talent but are also extremely ignorant of the most elementary demands of the business.

It is time, at last, to remove such rubbish from the studios, and to clear the way for true artists.

III

I have already, above, had occasion to mention what it is in man that is

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his most valuable capacity in view of the demands made on him by the cinematographic art: the most valuable and dominant capacity (which distinguishes it from every other artistic material) is motion. Naturally, all the other arts that enter into the cinema have to reckon with this, and have to conform with man; that is to say, they must not lose sight of the fact that only that has real value for the screen which accords with human action. Only such scenery has artistic value as can harmonize with the human figure as the unit to which the first place belongs in the general scheme of cinema activity. So one has to remember that man can not be altered, while the settings can. Evidently if the two clash, it is the architect who is to blame, and if one has to yield to the other it is not the man to the surroundings, but the surroundings to the man.

Let us see what defects in presentday decorative art are important in the cinema, in the sense of infringing on the impression that is received from watching a moving man, and the observation of what conditions are essential to secure a location in which a man should appear really located, and not merely put. The chief principle which has to be taken as the basis of the decorative art is the man in the center. Consequently everything in the setting that has an independent value, apart from its relation to man, is at the best unessential, or even, let me plainly say-unnecessary.

Now let us see how the scenery should be formed and the settings arranged in order not to be independent artistic qualities, but to be auxiliary means to the surroundings in which the man is the center.

First of all, let us ask ourselves what we want to represent: a study in which a man is working, or a man working in a study? I do not think there can be two opinions about the matter. When we want to see handsome furniture, or other articles of luxury, we go to the windows of the suitable shops. But when we go to the cinema we go to see the action—not the study and not the expensive surroundings—but the man. And what do we find?

Think only of the absurdity of what is generally offered us in such cases. We see: 1st scene, at Prince X's. Before us is a colossal interior, neither dining-room, nor drawing-room, nor dancing-room, nor all of them together. There are endless white col-

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umns, arches, niches, stairs leading up, steps leading down—carpets, drapery, flowers... a picture-gallery on the walls, a whole collection of bronzes, china and marble burdening the pedestals, the window-sills, the shelves, the cupboards, and even the tables. Suites of expensive furniture are pedantically set out everywhere, and there is literally nowhere, not a single corner, which has not been reached by the diligent and painstaking hand of the decorator and requisitionist. And imagine—suddenly into this room, which is neither a museum nor an antiquarian's shop, an ordinary mortal enters in ordinary present-day clothes, and sits at the table!

From the first moment the arrangement strikes one's eye by its cumbrousness, its discrepancy and the complete absence of reality and truth. It is obvious at once that this is only handsome and luxuriously arranged scenery, and not a room in which people live and work. Nevertheless, the spectator's whole attention is absorbed by the ingenuity of the arches, the gobelins and articles of luxury, and the presence of the actor and his movements no longer interest the spectators.

It is plain that the man is here called on to supplement the fantasy and flourish of the architect, which is objectionable. And it is also a misfortune that following the artist-decorator from the big studio disposing of large means and a variety of material, comes the small architect from a small firm that has not at its disposal either the means or the accessories, but who also wishes at all costs to display a luxurious setting. Here we have to witness things that are in the highest degree wretched and ridiculous.

It is important to remember that every art in its efforts to represent, gives something up, sacrifices something. This sacrifice consists partly of the material of art, partly of our receptive powers. Architecture can not do what music can do, music can not do what sculpture can accomplish; each art is impotent in face of some category of existence and sacrifices the joys which are bound up with that category. The art of the cinema is the most complex of all. If each art is itself the result of certain sacrifice, how much is the necessity of sacrifice intensified here, where the production of art results from a cooperation of all the arts?

The cinematograph is one immense mutual concession. And of all the cooperators in the associated art, up to now, the least yielding is the architect. It is true that it is more difficult for him to make concessions, because for his art the conditions of the cinema do not set bounds, but, on the contrary, give it scope and evoke it. The architect can build up all he likes without asking himself whether all that he can build should be built. He is satisfied when, watching the picture, he hears the exclamations of the spectators enchanted by his fantasy

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and his skill; but is it right for him to avail himself so of the advantages of his art, without considering that his co-workers are limited in the possibilities at their disposal?

In the cinema one should distinguish two groups of scenery:

(a) Historical sceneries, that is to say, such as represent a definite epoch, the style of which should be clearly expressed; and

(b) Sceneries representing to-day. When arranging settings of the first group one may sometimes tolerate an excessive richness and distinctiveness in the dimensions and form of the style, with a cultural-historic aim, as it is useful and interesting for present-day spectators to see incarnated in life that of which they have only read and heard. But, all the same, a sense of proportion should indicate to the director and to the artist the limits to which the actor, as the chief scenic material of the film, may be subordinated by sacrificing him to another scenic material—to the architect, the painter and the sculptor.

In present-day plays the actor should absolutely dominate. Here the architect's art should be in reverse proportion to the actor's art. In as far as a fine and vivid presentation of the corners of the life presented is required by the actor, to that degree should the architect surround him with plain, simple, and life-like settings. Here definitely the settings. Here definitely the settings should be outlined only as a background for the actor, no more, and as far as possible they should consist of the simplest architectural angles

To become a worthy co-operator in the entirety of the cinematographic art, the artist-architect must accomplish feats of self-denial by setting a voluntary limit to the possibilities open to him. The principle of this self-denial is dual; first an accordance with the possibilities of the other elements that come into the production, and second with the most essential element in the cinema—the man.

Concluding this survey of the fundamental bases of the joint art of the cinema, I can not omit to mention the fact that often all the efforts and achievements of the director, the actors, and the architects in any picture, are destroyed by a colleague of theirs who stands on a somewhat different plane of creation.

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I refer to the camera-man and his art.

The ruling principle of the photographer, that a man and illumination are conceivable without scenery but that man and scenery are unimaginable without light, has proved insufficient. We know that light is essential, but what light? I think not only a light necessary for the exposure of a film, but a light which is directed, and brings out one object to greater advantage than the other objects of the given scene; a light illuminating, in the sense that it discriminates.

The photographic art, like every other art, never demands light alone—it always demands light and shade. Light and shade. They are the physics of life, the psychology of life, and the esthetics of life. Can the cinema-art, as an expression of life, get on without light and shade, or be content with light alone? Any camera-man who will consider this even a little, will understand of what achievements he deprives the present-day cinematograph.

That the actor and architect should not complain that the camera-man has ruined their creation by unskillfully lighting up one or other plane of it. lighting up one or other scene of it. It is necessary that the artist-cameraman should labor at his art equally with the director and the architect, endeavoring not to lag a step behind

them; for it is a mistake to think that the business of lighting up the actor and the settings is an affair of artistic arbitrariness or of momentary inspiration. No; in all the arts laws operate as they do in nature, and as shade is the very basis of every art (for without shade what art is there?) it is comprehensible that a knowledge of these laws is important for every artist.

Only in this way, by way of the united work of all its co-operators, will the cinema be able to overcome its enemies and detractors and triumphantly assume the high, cultural, artistic educator which its nature has decreed for it.

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No. 11

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The only publication conducted solely for those who THINK about motion pictures.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, JULY 23, 1927

OFFER TO PRODUCERS

(Copy of a letter mailed on Monday, July 11, to Fred W. Beetson, of the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors of America, Incorporated.)

Dear Mr. Beetson:

It has occurred to me that the producers of motion pictures are at a disadantage in not having a medium through which they can present their side of the difference in opinion existing at present between them and their employees. The Spectator reaches everyone in the industry, but presents only views antagonistic to those held by the producers.

I wish you would inform your organization that I will be glad to give it space in The Spectator in which it may take issue with me. I will give it any number of pages that it can use legitimately in replying to arguments that I have advanced, or in presenting new arguments to support its view of the matters now at issue.

I want no pay or thanks for the space thus used. The readers of The Spectator are entitled to both sides of the case, and as I can see only one side I have to call on the producers to present the other one.

Yours very truly,

WELFORD BEATON.

Up to the time the forms for this issue of The Spectator closed the producers had not replied to the above letter. They did not even acknowledge its receipt.

Writers and Actors Should Be Organized

OVEMENTS undertaken recently to weld screen actors and screen writers into strong organizations to force producers to conduct the motion picture business in a manner consistent with its importance are steps in the right direction. Producers have had things their own way quite long enough. Through the

media of inequitable contracts and by the practice of every form of unfairness that monetary minds could conceive they have forfeited the trust of those upon whose brains they must rely for the purely intellectual ingredients of their output. It is almost unbelievable that the employees of such a tremendous industry must fight for what employees of any other industry gain by right of employment: ordinarily honest treatment. Producers have brought about the present situation. I must admit that to one like myself, sitting on the sidelines and with no material interests at stake, the whole affair is so amusing that it is difficult to discuss it with so much gravity that the chuckles will not show through. The Spectator is dedicated to the cause of better pictures and can view with complacency the present turmoil, for all the little fellows running around Hollywood to-day can not come any nearer preventing screen art achieving its destiny than an ant can be instrumental in diverting an elephant from its course. I do not believe in unions, but I do believe in waging a fight with the most potent weapon. Only an organized movement will set matters right; consequently I am glad to see both the actors and writers organizing to present a united front. But I do not approve of everything they have done thus far. I think it was Rabelais who wrote: "The Devil was sick,-the Devil a monk would be; the Devil was well,—the devil a monk was he!" The producers are sick and with monkish piety they ask the Actors' Equity and Screen Writers' Guild to suggest a remedy for their ills. The only thing more ridiculous than the request was Equity's and the Guild's compliance with it. Very gravely these organizations outline treatments which never will be read by the producers, who know that they are valueless, for they are but general remedies for specific ills. "Give us an honest cost sheet, if there be such a thing in the industry, and we will point out to you specifically where you squandered the money of your stockholders," should have been the counter-request of the actors and writers. The actors display a belligerent spirit at a meeting and agree to unite

Have Patience!

For pictures—oh, well, you know, sometimes of course They're worthy of the press books' ballyhoo, And then again—perhaps they might be worse—
If worse they could be! Say, how do you React when hope floods high, and then recedes
And Darkness spreads o'er all its pall of woe?

And Darkness spreads o'er all its pall of woe?
Are you content to drink the bitter leeds,
Or do you damn the motion picture show?

For life is all too chary with those finer tones
That bring to hearts their meed of joy or love;
And lacking chance, perhaps, or charm to win our own,
We hailed the screen as manna from above.

Ah, hope deferred, how poignant is thy pain!

How dark the night without one beam to cheer!

The noblest art that circumstance e'er gave

Must bear the load of ignorance and fear.

Can genius soar when burdened by the dross
That vulgar minds than life esteem more dear?
How reach the stars when dread of earthly loss
Condemns the soul, in grief, to linger here?
Ah, no! 'Tis written large within the book of Fate

Ah, no! 'Tis written large within the book of Fate
That worth transcends the base-born's low desire;
And souls possessed of fortitude to wait

Will yet be warmed by Art's celestial fire.

-GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN.

to protect their interests, but some goof gets up and moves a resolution setting forth that the producers should be "offered the heartiest co-operation." Coercion, not co-operation, is what producers need, and it is not good strategy on the eve of battle to inform the enemy that your war clubs are stuffed with down. Actors have many legitimate grievances. They may disregard any protestations of holiness uttered by the producers and understand from the first that any improvement in their status will be granted by the producers only under compulsion, and only after it has been reduced to a written instrument drawn so carefully that the producers can not quibble their way out of it. In the matter of contracts thus far producers have had all the best of it. But all they should be made to yield is just what is fair. Even that much will agonize them.

Writers Have Their Great Opportunity

HE actors have led in one fight that all branches of the industry should take a hand in. The whole history of human endeavor shows us that there is a certain limit within which a man must confine his mental or physical exertions if he is to work at the peak of his efficiency. This certain limit has been established throughout the civilized world as eight hours in every twenty-four. The actors ask that this universal rule be applied to the manufacture of pictures. It is reasonable, just, and sensible. There is no more reason why a man should work overtime in making a picture than he should in making a piano. Over one year ago I said in The Spectator that every studio in Hollywood should close at five o'clock every evening and at one o'clock on Saturday. At that time, as it is now, my only thought was for better pictures. I hold no brief for actors, writers or directors. As individuals they can work their heads off and become nervous wrecks without disturbing the serenity of a single moment in my back garden where I do my writing. But good pictures can not be made by tired brains, and therein lies my interest. For years producers have held to the mistaken view that there was money in squeezing every possible hour of work out of every actor on the set. That they lost money for every hour over eight that they made an actor work on a given day is a fact that they lack the mental equipment to understand. They really believe it when they say that you can not apply an eight-hour day to pictures. The poor fools! Only a year ago they were saying that the public did not want pictures made from original stories. They will tell you, too, that a perfect script is impossible. Poor, poor fools! Only the application of mass strength can penetrate the density of the stupidity of producers. Of all those engaged in making pictures the writers are in the prettiest position. It is a literary art and some day they must dominate production. They have more to gain in a material way than any of their confreres. They should follow the lead of the actors and make the Guild as powerful as possible. They should do battle against the producers with more zest than any of the others, for they have been more harassed by them. Recently I have been reading copies of the contracts writers have been forced to sign upon going to work in studios. Not one of them could stand up for a moment in a court of law, but as starving was the only alternative, I can understand readily why writers signed them. The abuses and the insults to which writers have been subjected at the hands of producers and supervisors should keep them in a fighting mood long enough to put over their demands for a uniform contract. But they should not rest there. They are as much interested in an eight-hour day as the actors, even though their work is of a nature that can not be limited by a time-table. They are interested because the improvement of all other conditions improves theirs. The first move of the reborn Guild should be to line up with Equity and to stand ready to join in any fight without being too finicky about whose fight it is.

There Is Nothing to Argue About

HIS is written on Sunday, July ten, up to which date the producers have had nothing to say about the proposed eight-hour day. Perhaps before you read it some action will be taken. All I have read so far is that the producers "will give their answer." The attitude of the actors, directors and technicians should be that their demand admits of but one answer, and that there is nothing to argue about. Executives who have brought to the verge of bankruptcy what should be the most prosperous industry on earth, have not the intelligence to understand how reasonable working hours would benefit them, consequently the matter should be decided for them by those who are affected most directly. With proper organization in the studios an eight-hour day can be instituted, the cost of production will come down, pictures will be made more rapidly and will average higher in entertainment value. Producers, of course, will disagree with my conclusions, but as they are the people whose ignorance and general incompetence have got motion pictures into their present mess, their opinion on anything pertaining to their business is really not a matter of great importance. No doubt they see in the demand for an eight-hour day only an effort by those whom it affects to get more pay by working overtime. No doubt some of the actors so regard it. Only to the extent that an eight-hour day becomes an actuality is The Spectator with the actors in their demand for it. Producers should see to it that enough work is crowded into the eight hours so that no overtime is necessary. It can be done, but I doubt if there is enough executive brains in the studios now to do it. An eight-hour day and a uniform contract are two things that all those engaged in making motion pictures should insist upon. They have their bosses-a timid bunch at best-on the run, and there is justice in their demand for these two reforms. The Spectator is with them most heartily. As soon as they show signs of abusing the power they possess The Spectator will be against them just as heartily. Extremes must be avoided. For instance, take the way Al Rockett regards the demand for an eight-hour day. As a representative producer he is quoted in the Times as follows: "All I can say is that if stars and other important actors insist upon the eighthour-a-day schedule, most of the producers will have to return to the bond business, or selling clothing, from which they started." In a crisis like the present Rockett, and, indeed, all the rest of us, should remain calm and not look at the future through too rosy glasses. I am

a firm believer in an eight-hour day, and I believe it will do pictures a great deal of good, but in my wildest imaginings my optimism never has matched Al Rockett's. If he can demonstrate that his prophecy would be fulfilled any argument that I could advance in support of the reform would be weak and puerile. In fact, the argument would be closed. It would be the height of silliness for any one to criticize adversely a movement that would send our present crop of motion picture producers back to the clothing business. But I can not share Al's enthusiasm. In his support of the reform he should show more restraint. Anyway, it is dangerous to drive our producers into other lines of endeavor. Apparently Louis B. Mayer and Cecil de Mille wandered into the moneylending business, and see what happened to them!

Why the Producers Abandoned the Idea

THE HASTE with which the producers agreed that, after all, they didn't care so very much whether there was any salary cut was the high comedy spot of the very comical flurry that was staged four weeks ago. There is no reason why the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences should take too much unction to its soul in connection with the action of the producers in abandoning the idea of a raid on salaries. The Academy merely provided the producers with an opportunity to bow themselves out gracefully. It was their own shrewdness that prompted them to take advantage of it. With the aid of their press agents they got out rather well. Pete Smith -made the best job of it, getting Louis B. Mayer from under quite gracefully. Jesse Lasky is the only one in the bunch whose course I admire. He was the first to take a stand for lower salaries and the last man to stand by his guns when retreat was sounded. He has not yet surrendered wholly. He may enforce the salary cut on the first of August. I do not agree with his views; I believe that he personally is responsible for the inefficiency which exists in his studio, but I admire him for having enough nerve to try to see the thing through after he had started it. Those whom a salary cut would affect should not accept too seriously the protestations of the Mayers and Schencks that the idea of the reduction was wrong. They tried to put it over, and withdrew it only because they discovered that if they did not withdraw the world at large would find out how hopelessly incompetent they are at running their own ends of the business. They did not abandon the idea of a cut in salaries because the Academy asked them to, or through any regard for the welfare of their employees. There is not one in the bunch who would not cut salaries to-morrow if he were not afraid that his efficiency would become a point at issue between him and his employees. Louis B. Mayer retreated in exactly the same manner as I would have if I had been in his place. He made a virtue out of a necessity, and had Pete Smith write him a beautiful speech about how much he had the welfare of his employees at heart. There was nothing 'else left for him to do. Of course it is all bunk, and coming from Mayer, is funny. His whole career in pictures has been one of selfishness. His standard employment contract is notorious for its one-sidedness, and he would scream at anyone who would ask for time to consider it before signing it. Yet when he deserted Jesse Lasky he issued a statement dripping with his high regard for the interests of his employees. Only fools would be deluded by it. The truth of the situation is that the producers never for a moment imagined that their royal decree would not be received by their employees in the same spirit of humility that always has been manifested on the lots. As soon as the employees pointed out the real cause of extravagance in production the producers beat a hasty retreat. Their cowardice, not a higher motive, prompted the action.

What Constitutes Studio Extravagance

THE COST of production should come down, but nothing that the producers have done yet would indicate that they know how to do it. Lasky's effort to stem extravagance is pathetic. He organized a committee which includes among its members such well known economists as Bebe Daniels and Wally Beery, and he generously offers to lend the committee to the Academy in order that the whole industry may profit by contact with it. I have not much faith in Lasky's method, but I have respect for the honesty of his intention. Mayer's statement would indicate that he has organized all his employees into one vast committee on savings, an equally futile move. The crust of inefficiency that coats the Mayer organization is too thick to yield to delicate treatment with a lancet. It is a blasting proposition. A lot of incompetents must be jarred loose from their jobs before saving can be effected. It will be time enough for any studio to apply a remedy when it understands the disease. What contributes to the excessive cost of production? Let us consider the Metro organization. The conclusions we arrive at in our examination of it will apply to other organizations. The first thing we discover is that it has a gigantic overhead for which there is no justification whatever. Enormous salaries are paid for fifty-two weeks to people who do not work for a quarter of that time. Actors and directors roam around the lot ready for work, but there is no work for them. Writers with capable picture minds are not allowed to reflect their personalities on the screen, the quality that the screen needs to give it the variety it so sadly lacks. Irving Thalberg has a certain flair for pictures, but more than offsets it with a total ignorance of the economics of making pictures. I suppose he wastes more money every year than any other man connected with any industry in the world. Harry Rapf is one of the most decent chaps in the business, but he doesn't understand what kind of a business it is. Hunt Stromberg and Bernie Hyman know nothing about screen values. There may be others, but I believe these four men dominate Metro production. Under them shooting begins on pictures before the scripts for them are developed. Thousands of dollars are spent in erecting sets that never reach the screen. Actors work for weeks and all we see of them on the screen could be shot in one day. Twice as many scenes are shot as can be crowded into the footage required for the completed picture. Some pictures are so awful that they are shelved, every dollar spent on them being a total loss. Others for which actors are employed and receive salaries for weeks are never begun. I have personal knowledge of a case of one actor who received a call to go to work on the Metro lot. He roamed around for a Page Six week trying to discover who had called him, and why.

At the end of that time he was given a check for seven hundred dollars and was told the production had been called off. I saw the check. Most of the pictures are so bad after they are edited that retakes are necessary, as well as much title-writing and excessive pawing over, all of which contribute to the excessive cost. All of these abuses have ramifications that spread throughout the organization. A thousand dollars wasted entails as much bookkeeping as a thousand dollars spent wisely. They are abuses which Louis B. Mayer thinks he can cure by retaining in office the people responsible for them, and by asking everyone on the lot to stop, look and listen. He will tell you that in making pictures waste can not be avoided. And in that he is absolutely wrong. If he were qualified for the position he holds he would know it is wrong. Also, if he were qualified for his position there would be no

With Apologies to Bebe and Wally

RESUMING that I am right in pointing out the various ways in which Mayer's organization ruthlessly squanders money, let us see if we can devise a practical remedy. I am a little diffident in approaching the task now that Bebe Daniels and Wally Beery have entered the lists as picture economists, but in the hope that I can get my plan to the public before they have cured all the ills that afflict the screen, I will go ahead, and hope Bebe will pardon my impetuosity. John Colton is on the Metro pay-roll. He is a great dramatist, and it is a safe presumption that he can write good screen material. On the pay-roll also are men and women skilled in writing continuity. One of them, whom we will call Bill, works with John. Let us suppose that the lot has been reformed and that production is being handled intelligently. John writes a story for a picture and Bill begins to put it into shape for shooting. Any weaknesses in John's story crop up in Bill's continuity. They take all the time they want. They quarrel over this scene and that one, rearrange the sequences and change their characterizations. At last they are satisfied. They have a good script. The director who can handle that kind of story to good advantage is assigned to it. He estimates the footage that every scene will take and discovers that the total will be eight thousand feet. The picture is to be released in seven reels. John, Bill and the director go over the script and finally get it down to the proper footage. A shooting schedule is drawn up, providing for the highest paid actors being killed off first. All salaries start the day the people go to work. The script being perfect in every detail, the director shoots it as written. There's your cure for all the production ills. John and Bill having had all the time they needed, their script was inspiration-proof when they completed it, consequently there is precious little excessive footage when editing begins. That means quick and economical editing. Every scene being shot as described in the script means that the script titles fit the action, consequently the picture is titled automatically as it is edited. Every scene shot being in the picture means that no money was wasted on building sets that were not used or in employing actors who did not act. Every hour spent in shooting yielded something that reached the screen. John and Bill being masters of their craft eliminated the necessity for supervision. To balance the program of releases a romantic drama was needed and John was instructed to write one. That was the extent of the supervision. At the same time other Johns and Bills, and Jennies and Bessies on the lot were preparing stories for the rest of the releases. They were trained to write directly for the screen, not for the Thalbergs and Rapfs. Just enough directors would be on the pay-roll to keep the program moving. They would not be important, for any man after brief training would be able to direct from a perfect script. Perhaps John's picture would be a flop. It might not be about a subject that the public liked. But it would have the virtues of being well made and costing about half what its present flops cost Metro. The advantage of my system would be that it would be almost certain to produce a successful picture, whereas by the present supervisor plan the Metro system is almost certain to produce a flop. One of the greatest imbecilities of the Mayer organization is its adherence to the contract player system. There are eight or ten stars whom it would be wise to keep under contract, but every other contract is an individual example of utter idiocy. If Mayer, Thalberg, and Rapf had any qualifications for the jobs they hold they would understand without prompting that the way they run the contract system is both an economic and an artistic blunder.

Perfect Script a Cure for All Ills

NE thing that Lasky, Mayer, Schenck, Laemmle, and the rest of them do not seem to be able to get into their heads is that the story is the only thing that counts. The perfect script suggests its own cast and director. It automatically effects every saving that the producers are striving for. A succession of perfect scripts on the Paramount lot would do its own thinning out of the pay-roll, for it would reveal those who are of no value to production. I have a high regard for Ben Schulberg's picture ability. With him to keep the program balanced, and a staff of thoroughly trained and tested writers Paramount could be turning out twice as good pictures for half as much money as it is spending now. Bernie Fineman, Lloyd Sheldon, and Bennie Zeidman now stand in the way of either economy or art in Paramount pictures. It is inconceivable to me how Lasky can figure that people without creative brains can make any contribution to a creative art. Perhaps Bebe and Wally will be able to show him how he can save some money by refraining from painting a wheelbarrow or by using the exposed insides of in-coming envelopes for inter-office communicating, but he never will effect any saving that counts until he forgets all about saving and gives all his thoughts to the manner in which a picture should be produced. The better the picture, the greater profits it will earn. The screen industry is in the fortunate position of making a product that is perfect only in the degree that the right amount of money is spent on it. Building sets that do not reach the screen means that the script could not have been perfect, for you can not take a piece out of perfection and Therefore the right amount of have perfection left. money means the amount a perfect script calls for, and you can not be either economical or extravagant with a

perfect script. It makes the cost absolute. Producers who are bellyaching about high costs should cease making further asses of themselves by dabbling at reforms in a manner that reveals their abysmal ignorance of what they are trying to reform. If they reversed their mental process and thought of the story first and money last there would be no waste. Consider the way they go at things now. Lasky decides that Moritz Stiller is to do an Emil Jannings picture at a cost of a quarter million dollars. This is the annual budget, prepared a year before the shooting is to begin on that particular picture. As there is no story in sight how, I ask you, can Jesse know it is going to take a quarter million dollars to make a picture from it? But a shooting date is fixed. It is decided that, say, Louise Dresser and Gustav von Seyffertitz are to support Jannings. They are engaged to start at a certain time, and they go on the pay-roll at that time, even if it be weeks before shooting begins, the reason for the delay being the difficulty in getting the story ready, although the studio knew one year ahead that such a picture was to be made. If all the thought had been put on the story from the first everything else could have slipped into its place without any lost motion and without any waste of money. Any one with brains enough to grasp the fundamentals of the business does not need to be told that it simply is a business of telling stories on the screen, and that the story therefore must be the all-important thing. Producers lack the necessary brains. They seem to think that the screen industry is something that God provided for the purpose of taking care of their relatives.

Should Fight Until Reforms Instituted

DUT out of the present turmoil will emerge a greatly improved screen art if full advantage be taken of the opportunity the turmoil offers. Before the supervisor system was inaugurated pictures averaged much higher than they do now. They have been growing worse steadily as the full effect of the system manifested itself. Few pictures have any literary merit and still fewer contain any notable acting. Yet there are many excellent writers in Hollywood and still more excellent actors. The positions of the writer and actor will be improved when pictures are produced properly. Inefficiency is rooted so strongly that improving conditions will be a long process, but it is worth undertaking. Those who will gain materially from the recognition of the value of brains, and those whose only interest is the improvement of pictures, should unite forces and give producers no rest until reforms are instituted. The brains of the industry did not invite the present fight. The producers started it and abandoned it only when they realized that the only outcome would be the exposure of their own incompetence. It should not be allowed to rest where it is. The screen is a glorious art, but will achieve its destiny only by fighting its way through the managerial stupidity that now retards its development. A producer can prosper permanently only to the extent that his pictures have merit, but apparently the only method by which he can be made to realize it is by clubbing him into insensibility and injecting the knowledge into him while he is unconscious. . He must be made to realize that the screen is a literary art and that literary minds must make their impress on its output. We never will have perfect pictures on the screen until we have perfect pictures on paper, and only authors can write them perfectly. And they can write them perfectly only when they are rid of ignorant supervision. The story must be recognized as the only thing that matters. At the present time Metro has so many contract players on its pay-roll that stories must be written to fit actors. Not until actors are made to fit stories can we have better pictures. If Metro retained only its stars and had all the rest of Hollywood in which to look for its supporting players it would be saving a tremendous sum every week and at the same time would be giving us much better pictures. The initial mistake of the producers was to lift screen entertainment out of the twenty-five cent class. That is all anyone should pay to see a picture. But as long as the universal charge is about twice that sum writers, actors and directors are entitled to twice a normal wage and should be alert to resist any further effort of the producers to make them the first victims of a return to normal conditions. Ordinarily I would be the last person to advocate a state of warfare in any industry, but with the welfare of the screen as an art as my first consideration, my advice to the writers and actors would be to give chase to the retreating producers and keep up the fight until reforms are instituted. H. L. Mencken writes me that the East is interested very much in the salary cut comedy. Producers have informed the outside world that those who actually make the pictures are paid too highly. It is only fair to present both sides of the case. The outside world should be informed of the incompetence of the producers. Writers and actors should unite to spread the information. I would not advise directors to join such a movement. The more sanely the industry is conducted, the less important will their position in it become.

It's Going to Be a Tough Proposition

THEN one considers the mental caliber of the producers, who must be made to see virtue in a suggested remedy before it can be applied, it seems to be a hopeless task to endeavor to introduce sanity into the making of pictures. Their total inability to grasp the fundamentals of their business is the greatest stumbling block in the way of reform. Schenck, Lasky and Mayer think they know all about everything that enters into the making of their product. A merely ignorant man may be taught something; the one who confuses ignorance with knowledge is a difficult proposition. The last point that the producers will yield is that literary minds should dominate the creative end of this purely literary art. Most of our screen executives resent the brains of the writers and envy them their culture. Their money gives them contact with an art too subtle for them to understand, but by association with which they hope to rise to a social level that God failed to equip them for. It is going to be difficult to persuade them that it is not their money that makes pictures successes, that the whole industry rests upon the brains of authors. The queer thing about it is that the money-loving producers can not see that they would make much more money if they would permit pictures to be made sensibly. As I have said previously, perfect scripts would automatically cure the industry of all its ills, yet every studio pays big salaries to supervisors who stand in the way of perfect scripts. Writing a screen story differs very little from writing a novel. The major tasks are the same, the telling of a logical and entertaining story. It is no more difficult for an author to write without assistance a manuscript for a publisher than it is for another author to write without assistance a scenario for a director. But I suppose when Louis B. Mayer reads a book by Booth Tarkington he wonders how in God's name Booth ever managed to write it without Harry Rapf's advice. There will be some hope for Mayer as a motion picture producer if he can be made to see that when Harry Rapf becomes qualified to tell Booth Tarkington how a novel should be written, he will be qualified to tell a screen writer how a scenario should be written. The kind of pictures we are getting now is the kind of books we would be getting if every author had to work under a supervisor who knew nothing about literature. Supervisors will resist any effort to improve screen conditions. Perfect scripts will eliminate them. They will argue that perfect scripts are impossible to secure because there are no people trained to write them. They do not know this to be true. They have not allowed authors to demonstrate how far they could go in writing directly for the screen, the way every screen story should be written. But I'll grant that there may not be now a sufficient number of sufficiently trained writers to provide enough perfect scripts to keep production programs moving. Then it is up to producers to allow writers to train themselves. In the very first Spectator published, number one of volume one, I advocated this training, so the idea is not a new one with me. Any manufactured article to be perfect must be made of perfect raw material. The story is the raw material out of which a picture is made. In the case of the screen it happens to be an industry that can manufacture its product economically only to the extent that the raw material has been perfected before the process of fabrication begins.

Colman Great in "The Magic Flame"

ONALD COLMAN as both the hero and the heavy in a picture is a cinematic novelty. In Magic Flame he plays a circus clown who looks like a prince, and a king, formerly the prince, who looks like a circus clown. The clown role is the heroic one. In it Colman is the same suave, polished actor who has a tremendous following among picture patrons. At best, however, all leading roles are pretty much alike, and everything that Colman does as the hero of this story we have seen him do many times before. And he always does them well. He has an air of refinement and distinction about him that no other leading man can match. He carries that same air into his characterization of the prince, a particularly vicious libertine, and in the role he gives the only really notable performance that has been permitted him in pictures, the only one in which he was not called upon mainly to be himself. As a heavy he is splendid, bringing to the part the same finesse that has made him stand out as a leading man, and adding to it a sinister quality and a callousness that prove him to be a really admirable actor. His characterization as the profligate prince and Henry King's direction are the features of this latest Banky-

Colman picture which Sam Goldwyn soon will present to the public. It is a good picture, except for its impossible titles. It is a romantic drama, and is strong in both romance and drama. There are several big scenes in it and they are directed most effectively by King, who more than atones in this picture for any of the weaknesses of Barbara Worth for which he may have been responsible. Goldwyn maintains a higher quality in his pictures than any other producer, and it is greatly to his credit that he never presents Miss Banky and Colman in a production that tends to detract from their box office value. He has given The Magic Flame a superb setting, and George Barnes and Thomas Brannigan have photographed it wonderfully well. The lighting is a striking feature. In fact, I never saw lights and shadows handled more effectively in any American picture. Henry King is one of the most intelligent directors we have. He commits none of the standard faults that mar so many pictures. There is not a foot of film in Magic Flame that bears witness to carelessness or lack of intelligence in direction. The circus atmosphere of the opening scenes is established admirably, although in their first love scene the circus performers speak titles that detract from it. They are beautiful titles-much more beautiful than such people would speak. There are titles that could not have been written by George Marion, Jr., and there are others which could have been written by no one else. When I saw the picture there were no credits presented on the screen, and I have made no inquiries since, but if Marion did not write the offending titles they were written so nearly in his style that it is all right to blame him for them. The chief fault of many of them was that they struck a jarring note. At times when the whole spirit of scenes demanded that Colman should preserve a kingly attitude he was given spoken titles that were cheap and inane wisecracks. They showed that Goldwyn committed a mistake that is committed so frequently: he regarded the titles, not as an integral part of the picture, but as something that should stand out as a separate feature. The mood of the titles did not even remotely match the mood of the scenes. They stood out like knotty protruberances on the smoothness of Henry King's direction, and were about as much in place as a drunken man at a church wedding. And I am quite satisfied that Sam Goldwyn will not have the slightest idea what I am talking about, for he approved the titles and my line of reasoning is too deep for anyone who could not see at a glance that such lowbrow titles have no place in such a highbrow picture.

Von Sternberg Scores With "Underworld"

JUST one year and one day ago I said in The Spectator that Josef von Sternberg "some day will be one of the outstanding figures of the screen". I had seen two pictures directed by him, A Woman of the Sea and The Exquisite Sinner. I have not seen his first bid for fame, Salvation Hunters. But I thought I saw enough in the two pictures that I did view to give me confidence in the young man's future. My confidence is strengthened by his latest picture, Underworld. It is a remarkable exhibition of screen craftsmanship, and stamps Von Sternberg as a really capable director. He is a master-dramatist and builds his drama with every means at his

command: acting, sets, camera, lighting and grouping. He seems to possess what the vast majority of our directors lack: a thoroughly intelligent conception of the materials and processes that play a part in the making of a picture. In A Woman of the Sea, a rugged drama of a fishing village, he provides a rythmic swing by cuts to the ocean's combers, and he uses with fine effect the flights of thousands of sea-gulls. The production is almost poetic. In Underworld he gets as far away from the purity of a sea breeze, as far removed from the music of poetry, as the dramatic pendulum can swing. His chief character is a thief and murderer; his male lead a drunken accomplice of criminals; his leading woman the mistress of the thief and murderer. For the most part his scenes are peopled with the scum of the underworld, and a criminal court is the most respectable interior to which he leads his audience. It is just a cheap, melodramatic crook story, a dramatization of the first page of a penny dreadful, and if accorded the conventional screen treatment would have been only another lurid movie. But Von Sternberg is not conventional. The soul of the poet still shines in his work, but it is hard and harsh and stark, and it hurries along at a breath-taking rate that makes you sit still and breathe hard; that makes you love George Bancroft while you are hoping that he will be hanged. And through all the impure atmosphere of the picture "runs a vein of pure gold: the loyalty of a criminal and the mistress of a criminal for the man whose mistress the latter is. And there is a love story, as clean and lofty and noble as one would expect to find in a rose garden. All these warring elements Von Sternberg has woven into what I am confident will be regarded as the most intelligently directed crook drama that ever has reached the screen. I believe Salvation Hunters gave Von Sternberg a reputation as a long-haired nut who never gave a thought to his audience. Underworld proves that he regards his audience as of considerable importance. It is an audience picture and is conspicuously above the average that Paramount has maintained for the past year. George Bancroft gives a powerful performance, one of the outstanding characterizations of the year. Fred Kohler, a man who has been a conventional heavy for years without getting very far, shows by his work in this picture that he is an excellent actor. Evelyn Brent and Clive Brook contribute perfect performances. There is none of the extravagant acting that we look for in underworld dramas. Von Sternberg apparently holds the view that the audience is interested only in the story and that it is not yearning to be impressed with the cast's acting ability or his skill as a director. He subjugates everything to the story and achieves the greatest art of all-the art that conceals art. I am quite sure that soon he will be recognized as one of the outstanding figures of the screen.

This Is All About Catching a Whale

JACK BARRYMORE has had a couple of very entertaining articles in recent issues of the Ladies Home Journal. "Hamlet in Hollywood" they were called, and they were rich in humor as well as containing a lot of shrewd observations. One of the incidents which he relates deals with the efforts Warner Brothers went to to provide a whale for The Sea Beast. They built one and

transported it to San Pedro, where it very promptly sank without leaving any trace of the thirty thousand dollars it cost. I often have wondered why the Warners did not cast a real whale for the part. It would not have been difficult. There are plenty of whales loafing off the shores of Southern California and it would be no great feat to get shots of some stirring scenes in which they play the leading parts. I know what I am talking about. I went out the other day and got a whale. Every one I tell about it seems to be surprised. All I had to exhibit in proof of my statement was a sunburned nose, for I couldn't very well bring the damn thing home with me. It weighed seventy tons and there wasn't room in my car for it, even if I could have dragged it out of the water. One night I was complaining to Mrs. Spectator that the necessity of writing The Spectator kept me so tied down that I couldn't accompany Barrett Keisling to British Columbia to fish for trout in streams I know so well. The telephone rang and Perry Wood asked me how I would like to go out next day and catch a whale. I thought I got him wrong and asked him to spell it. He did and it was whale all right. "Sure, I'll go," I told him, and at six o'clock next morning he rattled the screen on one of my bedroom windows and in two hours we were heading for San Clemente Island in a whaling vessel. Before eleven o'clock we sighted our first whale, but the captain passed it up because it weighed only fifty tons. The night before I was pining away because I couldn't catch a two-pound fish and the captain passed up one weighing one hundred thousand pounds! He said we'd get a real one later. We did. Whales help you catch them. Every little while they spout to let you know where they are. Mighty handsome of them, I'll say. Our Little Toto spouted nine times while we were approaching him. To say that I was intensely excited gives you but an anaemic and flaccid idea of my feelings. I was uproarious inside. Little Toto came up right under the nose of our boat. He was so big that we could have played golf on his back. The gun spoke, the harpoon went home and Toto started for the bottom of the ocean with a speed that made the winch roar. Finally it stopped after a mile or so of rope had been run out. The gunner's shot had been aimed with merciful accuracy. The whale died at the end of his first run. We pulled him up, lashed him to the ship's side, and towed him to Venice, where you perhaps saw him on exhibition on the Fourth of July. I got home the same night. Hollywood is some place to live in. Fancy getting out of your own bed in the morning, getting a whale, and returning to your bed for your next regular sleep. I thought I had fed on all the conveniently acquired thrills the world

Writing for United Artists

JACK JEVNE

"Tempest" John Barrymore
"Breakfast" . . Constance Talmadge
"McFadden's Flats" . First National
"Ladies at Play" . . First National
"Clinging Vine" . . Leatrice Joy
"Eve's Leaves" . . . Leatrice Joy

Writers' Club — HOllywood 7145

had to offer, but, believe me, all of them rolled together do not give you the wallop that catching a whale does. I want to try it again. If enough of you fellows will join me we'll get a boat some Sunday morning and I'll guarantee your emotions the greatest rampage they've ever had. Are you on?

"Smile, Brother, Smile" Brims Over with Smiles

TACK MULHALL scores again. This time it is in Smile, Brother, Smile, a picture produced by Charles R. Rogers for First National release. It's a corking comedy. It deals with the weals and woes of traveling salesmen and sparkles all the way through. Mulhall has advanced of late to the small circle of men whom I never fail to see when their pictures come along. He has a cheerful screen personality and an aptitude for comedy that is refreshing. In this picture he had the advantage of John Francis Dillon's intelligent direction. It is a business story, and it was a relief to get away for at least one evening from the standard model comedies and dramas that draw out their endless procession on the screen. Ten or fifteen years ago there were many business and industrial picture and the impression I retain of that period is that the stories were better then than they are now. I am not a business man, even if running The Spectator does become a bigger business proposition every month, but I can get a great kick out of a dollars-and-cents story well told on the screen. Of course I want my love stuff, too, but I like to have it sprinkled over something substantial, as it is in Smile, Brother, Smile. There is a delightful love theme running through the picture, Dorothy Mackaill being the girl in the case. She is quite all right, and as there is a suggestion of fluffiness in her hair she looks much more captivating than she did in something or other a short time ago when I criticized her for spoiling her beauty by having her hair plastered down in a most unbecoming manner. As a general thing I do not include hairdressing among the subjects which I endeavor to appear competent to discuss, but on that occasion Dorothy's hair got my goat. This time it is all right. Dillon admirably maintains the traveling-man flavor throughout, and injects comedy touches that will be responsible for much laughter. The titles are particularly good. They were written by Dwinelle Benthal and Rufus McCosh, and are rich in humor that does not depart from the atmosphere of the picture, a virtue which the comedy touches also possess. There is some comedy on board a sleeping car and it has nothing to do with the story, but it is pro-

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GRanite 6346 6713 Sunset Boulevard Hollywood, Calif. duced by a number of traveling men, which makes it quite admissible, because the story is about traveling men. The comedy relief that is objectionable is that which is not in keeping with the atmosphere of the picture in which it appears. It is not a breach of picture technic to make excursions from the thread of a story if the excursions do not go beyond its atmosphere, but when both story and atmosphere are forgotten the comedy relief becomes completely extraneous and the picture suffers as a consequence. T. Roy Barnes and two or three others are traveling men in Smile, Brother, Smile, and provide a lot of fun. It is not a perfect picture, and there are a few things in it that might be criticized, but it is clean, amusing, and entertaining, and when a picture is all that it should be allowed to contain a few faults.

"Becky's a Lady" a Good Picture

TAMES FLOOD has made a really excellent job out of Becky's a Lady. It is one of the best prize fight pictures I ever saw. Perhaps its most interesting feature is the debut of James Gleason as a screen actor. It was his human characterization that made Is Zat So? a great success on the stage, and he brings the same human quality, the same poise and sincerity to the screen. He does little acting of the obvious sort, but his personality registers strongly. The stories of Is Zat So? and Becky's a Lady are similar in that in each Gleason is the manager of a prize fighter who is pretty much of a dumbbell. The love between the two men is the dominant note in both stories, and is developed on the screen as effectively as it was on the stage. Harry Hoyt made a capital adaptation of the late Gerald Beaumont's story, and Charlie Logue prepared a good shooting script. Arthur Shadur supervised the production. All of them deserve credit, even though the picture was not free from faults when I saw it. The chief defect was the terrible punctuation of the titles. Lloyd Nosler's editing contained one sin that no film editor should commit. Jobyna Ralston and Charlie Ray indulge in a love scene while they are sitting on a sofa, and most of it is shown in individual close-ups. Both characters always should be in a love scene. Under no circumstance should it be cut into separate close-ups of the two characters that are essential to it. I bumped into the sidewalk conference after the preview and Nosler told me that the scene would be shown in a medium shot, so it will be all right-if he keeps his word. Charlie Ray gives an excellent performance. He has one opportunity to rise to dramatic heights and does it most convincingly. It is a splendid scene, one of the best I have seen on the screen in a long time. Jobyna has one of the standard girl parts, and leaves nothing to be desired. That clever youngster, Arthur Lake, plays Jobyna's brother, a good for nothing lad who sponges on his sister. It is a fine characterization. We have few boys of Arthur's age on the screen, and none of the rest can hold a candle to him when it comes to real acting. He's going a long way. Universal should hang on to him. We get a few glimpses of that very fine character woman, Edythe Chapman, who never fails to give a good performance; and Charles Sellon also comes through with a good performance. Flood's direction reveals his appreciation of the dramatic and human qualities of the story. Only in the scenes in which

it belongs does he permit his characters to indulge in histrionics. For the most part he rests content with telling his story, and he tells it in a manner that never allows the attention of the audience to wander. His handling of a fight sequence in which Ray meets the champion is splendid. He makes the fight dramatic, without lessening its appeal as a sporting event. The picture is free from interpolated comedy, a virtue which few program pictures possess. Any picture constructed intelligently has no place in it for "comedy relief", but we have so few people who can construct them intelligently that when one comes along we are surprised.

Laura La Plante's Fine Performance

AURA LA PLANTE never before gave such a scintillating performance on the screen as she does in Silk Stockings, her next Universal release. The downright cleverness of it is a revelation of her powers as a comedience. The story is a frothy little thing, but it is directed with consummate skill by Wesley Ruggles, making the picture the most engaging comedy that has come from the Universal studio in a long time. It is delightful all the way through, principally on account of the splendid performance of the star, who keeps the authence in a continuous roar of laughter by her very intelligent portrayal of a young wife who has a great capacity for being jealous of her husband. In one long court room scene she is superb. Entirely in pantomime she tells the story of her husband's courtship, and his addiction to gambling, drinking, and personal cruelty, all of which the audience knows are figments of her brain. It is the longest sustained and cleverest pantomime that stands to the credit of any of our screen comedians of either sex, and will win Laura a host of new admirers. Burr McIntosh is the judge before whom she gives her testimony, and he makes a large contribution to the comedy values of the sequence. I had no idea that Burr had such a delicious sense of comedy. Every cut from Laura to him was followed by another burst of laughter, so admirably did the old trouper maintain the fun of the scenes. Silk Stockings is clean for its entire length, and so easily could have been otherwise, for it contains some scenes that, to say the least, are intimate. For instance, Laura goes to bed in William Austin's room, and later hides in a clothes hamper at the end of a bathtub in which he prepares to take a bath; but Ruggles handles all such scenes with the best of taste that enhances, instead of detracting from, their mirth-provoking qualities. Less discriminating direction would have made Silk Stockings a farce so broad that it would have been vulgar, and no departure from the script would have been necessary to make it so. The more I see of Ruggles's work the more I am impressed with his ability for handling light comedy. The picture is rich in production value and contains many striking shots. One feature worthy of emulation is the presence in a swimming pool sequence of some extras who are expert divers. They give an air of reality to the scenes. Johnnie Harron plays the male lead, a part rich in the comedy possibilities that he always demonstrates an ability to realize. I like to see Harron on the screen. He is a nice looking boy, but is a modification of the standard model of masculine pulchritude that we are so used to gazing upon. William Austin also is in

this picture and he gives another of his silly-ass performances which always are provocative of much mirth. Otis Harlan is another member of the cast who also makes a considerable contribution to the hilarity of the affair, and Marcella Daly provides much beauty and some brains in a small part. The story was adapted by Beatrice Van, and Joseph Poland wrote the continuity and was story supervisor for the production. Excellent titles were written by Albert de Monde. I have seen quite a number of Universal pictures of late that I have liked, and I think it is about time someone was speaking up and giving Henry Hennigson, general manager for Universal, some credit for the improvement in the company's output. Under his regime Universal pictures are averaging higher than they ever did before.

"Chang" Great Because it's Real

HANG is engrossing for the same reason that Seventh Heaven is engrossing. Each gives the impression of being absolutely real. Chang accomplishes with the jungle and wild animals what motion picture producers rarely achieve with man-built sets and trained actors. Bimbo, the untrained white monkey, is the best comedian I ever saw on the screen. His acting is perfect, and there never yet has been on the screen a man who can act perfectly. There is a lesson in Chang for every man who makes a picture, and for every man and woman who appear in one. Screen acting got off to a wrong start. It aped the stage. The motion picture in one brief leap became a complete art, but it took to itself conventions that centuries of development had lent to a sister art, the stage. It ranted and struck poses, habits which it borrowed from the stage, with which it had little in common, although it still is held by many that it has much in common with the older art. The stage even in its highest development never was real. It never completely fooled us into forgetting that we were looking at actors roaming in painted forests. The actors were conscious that the forests were painted and became almost as artificial as their surroundings. They were not natural; they acted. They had to train their voices and their memories, and their physical acting became as much a mental effort as the reading of their lines. The screen borrowed its acting technic from the stage, and it has not outlived it. It still has an air of artificiality. The forests on the screen are real, but the actors are not. They reflect a painted forest environment. The development of screen acting will be towards complete natural-



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ness. Pictures to-day are artistic successes only to the extent that they are natural. Chang is an overwhelming success because we know that it is natural. It takes us into a jungle that we know is not painted, and introduces us to people whom we know are not actors, and every foot of the film enthralls us. It is a wonderful motion picture because it is a motion picture, and not a movie. Its absolute lack of acting makes it the best acted picture we ever have seen. All our Hollywood-made pictures are over-acted. On the stage the actor has to strive to make us forget that the forest is painted; on the screen the forest is real, and the actor does not need to make us forget it. His only task is to be as natural as the forest, but only babies accomplish it. They are the only perfect human actors we have. The outstanding director of the future will be he who makes us believe that a butcher is a butcher, not an actor. Most of our pretty girls who have become famous on the screen and have millions of friends who proclaim them great, have gained reputations as actresses by virtue of the fact that they know nothing about acting, but are the fortunate possessors of the knack of being almost natural. They would be completely natural, and greater favorites, if they realized that they are not actresses and wasted none of their energy upon trying to convey a different impression. No one acts in Chang. All the human characters go about their daily occupations, but they live in an atmosphere of drama, and Chang, in recording faithfully this atmosphere, becomes one of the greatest dramas ever filmed. When we have more directors who can create atmosphere and make their characters part of it, we will have more motion pictures that will be almost great.

"When a Man Loves" Is Quite Impossible

ANON LESCAUT, the principal character of When a Man Loves, is presented to us frankly as an attractive young woman who rates her love of jewelry above her love of virtue. First she lives with the man she loves; then she is inveigled into the arms of another man and apparently is content to remain there as he has more money than her lover. The second man drapes jewels all over her, and when she tires of him she goes back to her lover and unblushingly tells him that she can not give up the jewels of the man who bought her, thereby being untrue to that clause of the harlot's code which says a bought woman should stay bought. The lover is presented as exactly the kind of poor sap who would love a woman of that sort. And it is in such char-

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The story is as devoid of virtue as Manon Lescaut. It is planted in various conversations that Jack Barrymore most conveniently overhears. All that it accomplishes in the first half is to bring the man and woman together and then separate them, a series of uneventful reels being devoted to the purpose. When Barrymore goes searching for Dolores they most conveniently appear in a low dive at the same time and almost, but not quite, discover one another. Griffith did the same thing in Orphans of the Storm, but he tugged at our heartstrings when he did it. In When a Man Loves Alan Crosland, or the scenarist, does it so ineffectively that we have no feeling of pity for the separated sweethearts. This is where the intermission came at the Forum, and I went out on the sidewalk and asked myself why I should not go home, for I was not interested in anything that could happen to the main characters. But when someone tooted his horn I went back to my seat inside and remained through some reels of production value until Dolores and Jack were carried off to jail. Then I did go home. I don't know what eventually happened to them. I don't care. I refuse to feel concern for such a girl or for a man who could love her. I missed the poignant love story of the book and the opera. In Camille Fred Niblo made me sympathize with the misfortunes of the girl until I condoned her action in leaving her squalid home to become the mistress of a man of wealth. In When a Man Loves no such sympathy was created, and without it the story had no value. Barrymore is a really great actor, but he is not great enough, nor is there any other actor in the world greatenough, to make something out of nothing. As I watched him in this Warner Brothers picture I sighed for the Barrymore of Jekyll and Hyde or of The Sea Beast. I lamented that his great talents were wasted in such an inane part. Barrymore is regarded by the public as an actor and it wants to see him act. As a leading man with a classic profile he has paraded all his tricks and he should depart from such roles and confine himself to definite characterizations that give him opportunities to display some versatility. Some good, old-fashioned ranting would have been a relief in When a Man Loves. The Warners give the picture a picturesque production, although some of the great interiors are too mathematical in their lines. If no better story could have been secured it should have been done in color. Dolores Costello displays considerable acting ability, and Warner Oland and Sam de Grasse give their usual fine characterizations. But the picture is no credit to the screen and is a lamentable vehicle for an artist of the ability of John Barrymore.

acterizations as this that Dolores Costello and John Barry-

more make a bid for our sympathy in When a Man Loves.

"After Midnight" Cheap and Vulgar

A SERIES of close-ups of Norma Shearer is Monta Bell's latest contribution to the screen. When the camera backs up far enough to give us some other glimpses of After Midnight we find that it is a picture for which there is no excuse whatever. We have close-ups of Norma in every stage of activity from having a bath to getting drunk. We have a lot of close-ups of Gwen Lee, too, showing her doing everything from gargling listerine to dying. I thought the former would tie-up later

with a scene showing that she had halitosis, but there was no such tie-up, leaving no other conclusion than that the gargling was included for its own inherent artistic qualities. When Gwen dies she lives up to movie traditions by closing her eyes, which is not the old established method of dying. In the opening sequence we are teased into anticipating a close-up of Norma scrubbing her teeth, but just before she sticks the toothbrush into her mouth there is a quick cut to a close-up of Gwen curling her eyelashes. Norma and Gwen are sisters. Norma is a tight-wad and Gwen a live wire. Norma laboriously saves one thousand dollars and buys a Liberty bond; Gwen gets a Liberty bond as a favor at a wild party, which makes Norma conclude that she is a fool. To prove it she gets soused. I have seen, or read, the same situation somewhere else, but can not recall just where. Lawrence Grey is the leading man. First we see him as a hold-up man who operates with a piece of lead pipe, which he forces Norma to buy for ten dollars. Quite properly she beans him on the dome with it, and quite improperly she takes him to her room after midnight to minister to the resultant scalp abrasion. The instant he comes to he falls in love with her and decides to go straight. I seem to recall that that also has been done before. They are going to get married, the fact being planted in a pretty love scene on the sidewalk in front of the display window of a furniture store, an ideal place for such a scene. As they stroll away Norma sees some baby carriages in another window and is embarassed, still another incident that helps to establish the fact that either Monta Bell, as author of the story and director, or Lorna Moon, who · wrote the continuity, has a splendid memory. Lawrence later sees Norma with another man and gets drunk and spends all the money he had saved to buy a taxicab. Norma previously had seen him necking with another dame, and reverses the debauch idea. She blows in all the money she had saved first and then gets drunk. Oh, it's a lovely picture, all right! When it is released, by all means take the children to see it. It teaches a great moral lesson: that it is quite all right for a girl to get drunk and kill her sister by forcing a car over a bank, for no doubt the surviving sister can find a Liberty bond in the drawer where her deceased sister kept her underwear. The only redeeming feature of the production is a fine performance by Gwen Lee, to whom goes all the acting honors. Norma is not convincing in any of her scenes. Even if the story had any merit, and if Norma's acting ability had been equal to it, her performance would have been ruined by the long parade of meaningless closeups of her. The atmosphere of the picture is disgusting.

DUDLEY MURPHY

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If under the supervisor system M.-G.-M. has to descend to such depths to find material for the screen, it is time Mayer was doing away with his supervisors and giving people with clean minds an opportunity to show if they can turn out some pictures with entertainment in them and which people can view without holding their noses. The only clean thing in this picture is Gwen Lee's gargling.

"Ritzy" Is a Sorry Affair

7HEN It was released by Paramount the screen gave credit to Elinor Glyn for both story and supervision. When Ritzy was released the screen gave credit to Madame Glyn only for the story. It was an amusing comedy that is making a great deal of money. Ritzy is the silliest thing imaginable. Eliminate a clever characterization by William Austin and there is nothing left-no comedy, drama, nor sense. I refuse to believe that Elinor Glyn wrote the story as we see it on the screen, or that she had anything to do with the screening of it. She sometimes writes stories on trivial themes, but she makes them amusing, human, or alive. Ritzy is tiresome, unreal and dead. Madame Glyn made a notable picture out of her Three Weeks. She made the screen version of her book and supervised every sequence, consequently we may accept that production as the measure of her screen mind. And the mind that conceived such a picture, or such an amusing one as It, could not have been responsible for a terrible thing like Ritzy. No doubt the theme was hers, a trivial thing that required her entertaining touch to give it any value. As it reached the screen it is treated in a manner that emphasizes its triviality. The theme is treated seriously, lacking the literary touch that glosses its inherent unreality and makes it amusing to an extent that would make us forget its faults. In any picture the story is of less importance than the manner in which it is told. What Ritzy needed to make it tolerable was the touch that Madame Glyn gave It, a touch of cleverness that made it a better picture than Ritzy although the story did not have much more merit. In Ritzy we are given an American girl who determines to marry a duke for the sole purpose of spiting her friends. Told with a sense of humor such a situation might get by, and it might be possible to retain for the girl a semblance of sanity. But as we see her she is a senseless little fool, totally devoid of a sense of humor. Until Paramount develops an ability to put some wit into a picture that needs it, it would please its patrons better if it stuck to slapstick and objective drama. Ritzy gets off to a false start. Betty Bronson, as the American girl, gives a party at which James Hall, a duke incognito, is the guest of honor. We are supposed to be gazing on real society, but the hostess insults her guests and the guests insult the hostess. It is absolutely ludicrous, but not funny. The high point of asininity is reached when the hostess resents the desire of her girl guests to meet the guest of honor. No doubt Richard Rosson followed the script in directing the scenes, but as we see it the whole sequence is impossible. It needed a touch of humor to make it plausible. The thing gets more ridiculous as it proceeds, and not in one scene is any sympathy gained for the heroine, who remains a half-wit until the end. Joan Standing, sporting an extraordinary collection of freckles,

gives a human interpretation of a girl in love with Bill Austin, to whom all the acting honors go. The great ability of George Nichols is lost in the part of the silly father of the silly girl. The chief merit of George Marion's titles is their punctuation, but no one on earth could write titles that would appear to good advantage in such surroundings.

Here Is One That Is Full of Blunders

CCORDING to What Every Girl Should Know, a Warner Brothers production, there is a public office that most Americans do not know exists. It is "governor-general" of the state. Patsy Ruth Miller is trying to get her brother out of jail, and the "governor-general" writes her that he can do nothing about it. A title in this picture also reveals something new. It will be a surprise to those who compile our dictionaries to learn that there is such a word as "alright". The vitaphone apparently is not the only thing that Warner Brothers have discovered. Another bit of knowledge that I picked up when viewing this picture is that when you say you are going to the dressmaker's the apostrophe before the s is superfluous. And there were quite a lot of other things that this picture taught me, among them that Ian Keith needs a hair cut, that no legal procedure is necessary to confine children in an orphanage, that it is possible for a girl in such an institution to keep her hair marcelled, that it is quite the proper thing for a well bred girl to open another girl's hand-bag and read the letters found in it, and that when a girl meets a man in a store she is supposed to take his arm. What Every Girl Should Know is a very poor picture, so poor that it would be amazing if it were not so in keeping with the standard of so many that come from the same studio. Charles Reisner gave us The Better 'Ole, and for that picture I always will be grateful to him, but he displays a total unfitness to handle anything that demands the gentle treatment this other story should have received. Only in the closing sequence does he rise to any heights. Carrol Nye, Pat's brother, unjustly confined to prison, is liberated in time to attend her wedding, and the family reunion is directed with feeling and sincerity, being the only feature of the entire picture that has any merit in it. A title informs us that Keith has realized suddenly that he loves Pat, but it is not followed by a scene showing him registering the fact. Instead there is a shot of Pat selling a tennis racquet in Dyas's store. Every narrative title should be followed by something relevant to it. Reisner falls down in his treatment of scenes in the juvenile home. He resorts to the old fashioned idea that the attendants in such an institution are inhuman monsters with faces so hard as to make Buster Keaton look jovial by comparison. It was necessary to make Patsy Ruth and Mickey McBan unhappy in the place, but a director who thoroughly understood the drama in the situation would have shown the attendants as ordinary human beings with kind hearts, but powerless to relieve the harshness and heartlessness of the system they served. Reisner's direction makes it appear as if the orphanage staff inflicted cruelties on the inmates for the personal satisfaction it derived from it. It would have been a much bigger thought to have shown the staff human and the institution itself cold and unkind. But big thoughts have no place in this picture. A title tells us that visiting day at the penitentiary came for the hundredth time. As there is but one visiting day each month the title would indicate that Nye had been in prison for more than eight years. Perhaps he was, but if such were the case I can't see why Mickey McBan did not grow a little during the eight years. The audience knows that Nye was innocent, but an insert of a newspaper heading shows that he had had a "notorious career". Warner Brothers display a positive genius for turning out pictures which display a total lack of genius in their treatment.

Brainless Bit of Screen Literature

THEN motion pictures cease being just motion pictures there is going to be less discontent with screen entertainment. Even as recently as five years ago it was possible to do things on the screen that can't be done now. The last vestige of novelty has worn off. We have seen possibly every kind of interior that there is to be seen; we have grown used to all that costume designers can produce to intrigue us, and trick photography, double exposure, multiple shots, and things of that sort are old stuff now. We look clear through the extraneous materials that enter into the making of a picture and have eyes and mind only for the story. We are no more intelligent now than we were a dozen years ago, but all the intelligence we have is centered on the mentality reflected by a picture. Perhaps I can make a short cut to what I am driving at by using Rough House Rosie as an example. It has everything in it that the screen has outgrown and must avoid if it is to make progress. Rosie is a thoroughly wooden picture, one hun-



ALFRED HUSTWICK

FILM EDITOR AND TITLE WRITER

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dred per cent. movie stuff. I imagine that the wooden quality was planted in the adaptation by Max Marcin, a stage playwright who not yet has displayed any aptitude for the screen, although I understand he holds a position in the Paramount studio which permits him to dictate to those who have. The film moves along from one unconvincing sequence to another, without revealing that it had enjoyed contact with any real picture intelligence, without planting one definite thought, and without creating sympathy for any character in it. In her spoken titles Clara Bow is shown to be illiterate, and in her action she is planted as a roughneck. She spends a night in jail, being suspected of stealing a diamond bar pin from a "society" bachelor, but why the devil a bachelor should have such a pin Marcin doesn't make clear. She goes from the jail, where she made an instant hit with the bachelor, and we next see her making a fool of herself at a fashionable swimming party. Only in a movie could such a girl be admitted to such company. Later it is necessary to the story that she should be made to see how the society of prize fighters is much more desirable than that of fashionable people. She is shown at a party staged by an unexplained princess, and to have any story value the party must be one which truly represents life in the kind of society a princess would affect. It is more typical of life in the red light district, being composed principally of views of girls' legs and wives kissing other wives' husbands. It more nearly represents degeneracy than it does life in any stratum of society. There is a prize-fight which has no drama in it, for nothing hinges on the outcome, and after it is over Clara and the winner go into a clinch in full view of the thousands of people in the audience, a romantically secluded spot for a love scene. There are many other ridiculous things in the picture, but I have enumerated enough to illustrate my discourse. Not even a girl who rejoices in the dainty sobriquet of "Rough House Rosie" will embrace her sweetheart and kiss him passionately in full view of thousands of people. But even if there should be such a one, no love scene in a motion picture should be staged in such surroundings. A dozen years ago it might have been all right, but we long since have outgrown that sort of thing. Pictures by now should give the inpression that some imagination had a part in their making. No story has any screen value unless it can corrince us of its reality. Rough House Rosie does not comain a single convincing sequence. It is a perfect example if the kind of picture that should not be made. The adequate production and the fair direction of Frank Strayer are totally wasted on such a brainless piece of screen liteature.

One afternoon I saw When a Man Loves, which took months to make an cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. That evening I saw The Other Side, which took six days to make and ost seven thousand dollars. In the afternoon I was bord; in the evening I was interested. For straight entertainment the big picture could not compare with the little fre-reel one. The Other Side was produced by Fred C. Eperson, who calls himself the Epperson Productions. In a measure it is a product of the much-abused supervisor system, but as Bart A. Carre, who supervised it, alo was production manager, assistant director, technical drector and casting director, as well as the chief comedia on the screen, its merits can not

A FOOL AND HIS MONEY

T HAS always appeared to us a strange and interesting fact, and one worthy of deep consideration, why a supposedly intelligent public, as we Americans claim to be, will with reckless stupidity advocate and indulge in the expenditure of millions of dollars per annum, under conditions which could only evoke a smile of ridicule or contempt from any thinking human whose ego will permit of the admission of just two facts:

First: That life is uncertain; and

Second: That two and two make four.

With no little justice we resent lectures and lecturers from abroad as the intrusion of a stranger; but no such claim can be laid to the critism of a member of one's own household, meaning those who claim kinship under the same flag; and as such I write, and writing hope, that the frackness of my statements if unpalatable, may be weighed with the truth contained therein, and if some enlightenment results, who will object?

Of late some thought, much time, and more talk has been given to the question of economic cinema production, resulting only, as was shown in The Spectator issue of July the 9th, in an attempt to conserve the cost at the expense of the employees.

A very similar move was made some years ago, when the wild extravagances practiced by Life Insurance companies were exhibited to the world, and they retrenched by reducing the commissions payable to the agent, and "Pilate like," having ostentatiously washed their hands they continued and still continue, the crucifixion of the public.

Not the least of the oddities which confronts us, is that the very subject which forms the reason or excuse for this unnecessary and unintelligent expenditure, is one which few care to discuss, and none to learn, outside those who profit by this human weakness.

In advance, be assured that the economy of which we speak, refers not to the petty economics in your every-day life, nor any reduction of expenditure on those things which go to make life worth while, but on the contrary it refers exclusively to the paying of two or three times more than is necessary for investments made in the belief and under the assumption that these investments themselves are a saving and an economy.

The particular investment of which I speak is, "Life Insurance," and startling as it may appear, I can safely say without fear of contradiction, that there is scarcely one connected with the moving picture industry to-day who is not paying approximately twice as much as it is necessary to pay for the same insurance as he has, in the same companies as he is insured in. Moreover, it is doubtful if there is one who could not get back anywhere from twenty-five per cent to fifty per cent of what he has been overcharged by the companies.

AND THAT IS NOT ALL.

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be advanced in their entirety as a defence of the system. Ernst Van Pelt directed, and others in the cast were Florence Lawrence, J. Frank Glendon, James A. Marcus, Harry Northrup, Hazel Keener, Pat Harmon, Charles Gerson, Tom London, Jack Waltermeyer and Lucille Irwin. The photography was extraordinarily good and there were many exterior views of majestic beauty. Joseph B. Walker was cameraman. Screen art is going through the experience that all other arts have had: those who starve at it advance it most. These little fellows, who must rush to finish a picture before their bank-rolls pinch out, are doing more for the screen than the Laskys, Mayers and Schencks, with their millions. The Other Side is a thoroughly meritorious little picture, reflecting considerable credit on the many-sided Mr. Carre, the final letter of whose name has over it an accent which is beyond the mechanical ability of our type-setting machine to reproduce.

Not so, Mr. Beaton, note the accent—Carré.—Operator. Fancy that! And I've been avoiding its use! —W. B.

In the last issue of The Spectator there appeared this sentence: "In the motion picture business there are too many Jews given positions merely because they are Jews, and that is bad business." One good friend writes me that I should try to square myself in this issue because I am credited with an anti-semitic sentiment. Another man congratulates me upon having "given the Jews in pictures a wallop." Three Jews write me indignant letters asking me why I introduce race feeling into the present mix-up. I could write an article about German directors in Hollywood and the Germans would not resent it. I write about Jews in a perfectly legitimate way and Jews-only some of them, of course-get sore, notwithstanding the fact that what I wrote of itself contains nothing that should cause the soreness. Why are some Jews forever on the defensive? Are they hedged around with some divinity that makes mention of them being Jews sacreligious? If there be any person, Jew or gentile, who has read The Spectator consistently and has arrived at the conclusion that I harbor any ill-feeling against Jews as Jews I will leave him in undisturbed possession of his opinion. He would be a very small person, and I like to argue with big ones.

Some weeks ago I had as my dinner guest a well known Eastern writer who was securing data in Hollywood for a series of articles that will appear in one of our most widely read national magazines. He pumped

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me, but would not believe what his pump brought forth. I told him of the almost total lack of a sense of courtesy in the screen industry's conduct of its business. I told him that at the moment B. P. Fineman was the acting head of the production department of the biggest producers in the business, a really exalted position; that I could write him an ordinary and courteous business letter that he would not reply to because I criticize Paramount pictures adversely when they deserve it. The writer would not believe that a man at the head of such a big business enterprise could be so lacking in ordinary business courtesy, so I proceeded to prove it to him. I wrote Bernie a pleasant little letter asking if I might have a pass to the Paramount lot, something I didn't want, but I couldn't think of anything I did want. It was a request that an executive might concoct a reason for refusing, but the letter was one that it would be inexcusable rot to reply to. Bernie did not reply to it. I had proved my point, as the national magazine some time this fall will record. The funny thing about it is that the author had no difficulty whatever in securing one of Bernie's photographs to illustrate his article about the lack of business courtesy in the motion picture industry.

Perhaps Wally Beery is a comedian. I don't know. I have seen him in Behind the Front, We're in the Navy Now, and Casey at the Bat. In all three he does only what dozens of other players on the Paramount lot could do equally well. The parts are so asinine that all anyone playing them need do is to make an utter ass of himself. That that is all Wally does is not his fault. We know he is an excellent actor. Casey at the Bat might have



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been quite an entertaining comedy if it had not been bungled so badly. I saw the second half first and rather a liked it, at least enough to sit the show through to see the first of it, anticipating some good baseball scenes. It is a baseball story, making reasonable my expectation that there would be some baseball in it. I wanted to see the drama of Casey's capture of the New York fans. All I saw of it was an insert of a newspaper heading. If I had seen the first half first I would not have enjoyed the second half as much as I did, which wasn't so very much. But I enjoyed seeing Zasu Pitts again after quite a long spell of not seeing her on account of her submersion in a Von Stroheim production. Von certainly can keep 'em off the screen. These Paramount comedies have made a lot of money. I can't understand why Paramount did not go after more money by making them so they would appeal also to intelligent people.

Various motives have been ascribed to me for my stand on the matters now at issue between motion picture producers and those who work for them. My open letter to Jesse Lasky in the last Spectator seems to have created extraordinary interest and several acquaintances have asked me just why I "have it in for" Lasky. Others seem to think I "have it in for" the Metro crowd. Nothing so unimportant as my personal feelings has any part in a controversy that is so important. I have not had much contact with Jesse Lasky, but what little I have had has been of the most agreeable sort, and I always have found him a pleasant fellow. I am not acquainted with Louis B. Mayer, but for Irving Thalberg and Harry Rapf I have a high personal regard. I have had considerable to do with them and have found them at all times most courteous and pleasant. For a short time I worked under Harry Rapf and have for him a genuine liking. My personal inclination would be to say only the pleasantest things

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about everyone in the industry, but my personal inclinations are trivial things when the whole future of pictures is at stake.

The motion picture industry may be relied upon at all times to be diverting. Its latest comedy turn is its suddenly acquired longing for teams, George K. Arthur and Karl Dane, George Sidney and Charlie Murray, and a half dozen or so more. The only thing that the industry does not seem able to do is the only thing it should do. Its one mission is to produce stories. If a certain story calls for a team of comedians, well and good; put Arthur and Dane in the parts and let them go at it. The story should be the major consideration and we will never improve the average quality of pictures until it is. The star system has distorted motion picture art. M.-G.-M. can not make a greater mistake than imagining that the public wants to see Arthur and Dane together in a picture. The public wants only one thing-entertainment. The entertainment is provided by the stories, and they should be developed without thought of who is to play in them. Our producers persist in going at the business backwards. That is because they do not know what sort of business it is.

Casey at the Bat is a story of the Floradora sextette period. At that time there may have been four automo-

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biles in the United States, yet in one of the Marion titles Ford Sterling says, "His pulse is getting only four miles to the gallon." In another title Oscar, the bootblack on the Lasky lot who doubles as an actor between shines, tells a character that he "sure has 'It'", which is strictly of 1926 vintage. Views of the Polo grounds in New York show the old-time teams playing in front of the modern grandstands. After Jesse Lasky gets through finding out why his pictures cost so much he might try to discover why they are so silly.

In A Million Bid there is a scene which a title labels, "On the south coast of France." It shows great combers rolling up a wide expanse of sandy beach, the kind of beach that is formed only by the rise and fall of tides. The south coast of France is along the Mediterranean. There are no tides in the Mediterranean, no great combers and no such beaches as shown in this picture. Warner Brothers may be extravagant along some lines, but you can not accuse them of squandering money on technical advisers.

I am surer than ever that the trouble with two-reel comedies is that they are too short. The other night I saw a preview of Charley Chase's latest Hal Roach comedy. It will have to be cut down considerably to bring it within the required length—at least so I thought—but there is not a foot of it that can be cut out without lessening its entertainment value. It ambles along more slowly than most productions of its kind, but is amusing and interesting for its entire length.

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for our
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What You Should Know About the Law

Compiled by Attorney Roger Marchetti

A CCORDING to a recent decision handed down by an Amsterdam court, a performance given on board a liner entitles a composer or author to his fees, the law of copyright applying at sea as well as on land.

The Amsterdam court, at the same time, made two interesting decisions: First, that it was a public performance, and, second, that extra-territorial waters could be brought within the scope of national laws.

Accordingly, a German composer, discovering that one of his compositions had been played during dinner on board a ship, promptly claimed his royalties.

In a suit for infringement of complainant's copyright, recently brought to hearing in a New York court, it was found that there could have been no appropriation of complainant's ideas or literary form. It was charged by Joseph Grubb Alexander, Ernest R. Schayer, and Wilfrid North, complainants, that Sidney Howard had plagiarized Miss Lyon's (deceased) plot The Full of the Moon in his play, They Knew What They Wanted.

Judge Augustus N. Hand, after having heard the case and read both stories as published, together with rough draft of manuscript of the latter play, was of the opinion that events as set forth in both manuscripts where the incidents were similar, were not so uncommon as to give rise to any suspicion of a "steal". Miss Lyon's settings were on the order of Greek tragedy with characters of a highly romantic and tragic nature, whereas the characters in Mr. Howard's story had the homely philosophy of people of their type in this period.

The bill was dismissed with costs.

It may be interesting to know just how much rope the courts will allow imitators. Two Eastern nut companies recently clashed in court over their trade-marks. One company put out a trade-mark and slogan in certain colors and used it for extensive advertising purposes for several years. Another company evidently considered the idea as one that could not be surpassed and adopted one very similar, altering only the figure in the oval and changing one word in the slogan, using the same colors.

The defendant corporation claimed that it was purely accidental, but the court found "That the defendants have consciously followed the examples of the plaintiff and have adopted methods and practices similar to those of the plaintiff." However, the plaintiff was denied relief by the presiding Justice in the following opinion: "My view is that the defendant did consciously follow the example of his older competitor and did adopt

methods and practices similar to those of his successful rival. But I think he kept within his legal rights, although at some points coming dangerously near to crossing the line of legal safety."

This generous allowance on the part of the court, however, is a rare case, and not one to be considered as a precedent. Not only should the court protect the plaintiff in its rights, but the defendant, who has illegally attempted to imitate by unfair means his competitor's business, should be restrained, and the public protected from deception. It is not necessary that the attempted simulation should be identical to constitute an infringement.

Robert Milton alleges, in a breach of contract suit recently filed, that he was to manage Fox film productions this season. He asks six thousand dollars damages.

In a second suit, Robert Milton and Arthur Hornblow, Inc., jointly ask damages of twelve thousand dollars as commissions in obtaining screen rights to place motion pictures.

In a third suit brought by the two plaintiffs individually, Mr. Milton and Mr. Hornblow demand seventeen thousand dollars, alleging that this amount is due for violation of contracts regarding "various theatrical ventures" on the part of Fox.

Through recent Roxy decision, an action on the part of the Association of Moving Picture Producers to prevent projection-room showings for the purpose of press reviews has taken place.

Practical demonstration of its futility has been realized fully in the case of Cradle Snatchers (Fox). This picture was reviewed in the projection-room, with the result that the papers gave the picture none the best of it, and as a matter of fact, the audiences have proven it to be one of the best laugh features the house had held.

However, this action has effected a discontinuance of screening a picture prior to release since June 1st, thereby eliminating press showings.

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LETTERS

SHE DID GET HIM

Dear Mr. Beaton:

You complain that Miss Swanson did not get the same director for her Love of Sunya that was responsible for the old Eyes of Youth picture. Well, she did. It's a wonder you didn't get as many publicity bromides as I did on this point, while the picture was in production. They were proud of themselves for their perspicacity in engaging Albert Parker. Parker did all he could. The difference was that Clara Kimball Young wanted a director and Miss Swanson wanted a gentleman-in-waiting.

Having been able thus to correct you, the incorrigible Mr. Beaton, I feel like one of your Hollywood bootblacks who proclaim "we are not stars, but we do shine". I have just arrived in this quaint city from England, an addition to the already excessive company of writers about the screen. But I insist that I have a just claim to fame. I am positively the first screen critic to admit never having seen Hollywood Boulevard when it was a horse-track. I can not remember the days when Bill Hart was a bathing beauty, nor when Jesse Lasky played the cornet for Mrs. Lasky in pink tights. When Beverly Hills was a rendezvous for cows and sheep I was six thousand miles away.

Until now I have been living in the civilized world, and while I cast no aspersions on the refinements of this motion picture colony I suggest that a few critics to whom Hollywood Boulevard is just Hollywood Boulevard would be all to the good. What is wrong with the mass of screen criticism here is that it's got Hollywood on the brain and has lost all standards of the outside world. Let me once hear a critic say he was in the bicycle trade in Amsterdam when Menjou was a Keystone cop, and I

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can drink my next bottle of Hollywood

gin happily.
From all of which uncalled-for attack let me absolve the excellent criticism contained in The Film Spectator. May I hope that all the other letters you will receive about your little slip will be thoughtful enough to add this rider?

CEDRIC BELFRAGE.

THE BEST AND WORST

My dear Mr. Editor:

While I am in accord with your selection of twenty representative pictures-best and worst-I must confess I am curious to know why you select Camille among the ten best. First I must confess to a certain bias. Camille is the type of play that I detest above all others, primarily for

its unreality.

The picture makes it even more unreal. Never at any time during the filming could I accept Norma Talmadge as a quasi repentant Mag-dalen. Hitherto she has been associated with the chemically pure role, for which she is eminently adapted. Neither could I imagine her as a pulmonary victim; she is too-what shall I call it?—"corn fed" to carry out such an illusion. This is quite outside of the fact that I fail to see any entertainment in the dying throes of

a sex-ridden courtesan.

Presuming that the goodness of a picture depends primarily and principally on its entertainment qualities, I should be inclined to delete Camille from your list, and substitute the eminently low brow and eminently entertaining Rough House Rosie. Here we have a clever actress, who has won recognition solely on her own talents, giving a characterization, which might easily be made burlesque, with absolute fidelity, and without stepping out of character for a moment. True, the story is unconsequential, though quite sufficient to sustain interest throughout. Moreover, in your list you overlook entirely the possibilities of entertainment from a comedy point of view, which is entitled to representation.

As to the ten worst, it is a subject too uninteresting for argument. Still, three pictures might easily be found as bad or worse than Old Ironsides and The Yankee Clipper, and are also entirely lacking in the pictorial and photographic qualities of the latter

pictures.

Neither was I particularly impressed by Seventh Heaven, though I recognize its claim to a place in the first ten. Again, unreality and sentiment that fails to ring true when considered away from the glamour of

the picture itself.

My personal choice for the Grand Prize, without any reservations, is Chang. Here we have a series of events and action, so strange to us as to seem unbelievable, yet never for one moment has one the least doubt that every situation and action is authenic and actually transpiring. This, I take it, is the true mission of the

screen, to create the impression of realism.

Perhaps it is this faculty, to turn imagination into reality, that makes the Germans such successful picturemakers. With apologies for this long screed, I remain your sincere well wisher in your thankless crusade for better pictures.

F. ELY PAGET.

WE STAND CORRECTED

My dear Welford:

Hey-you slipped up. You're caught. A most flagrant case escaped your corps of proofreaders. In your review of The Rough Riders, page 8, 10th line from bottom, left-hand side of the page, you use the word "accept" in place of "except".

Now, by all the gods, what means this abuse of the Queen's English? Forsooth and egad, it is prime time (the rhyme is unintentional) you were taken to task. Pray don't say it was unavoidable. The transgression

is too glaring.

Personally, I like your journal so damn much I don't care how many mistakes you make in typographical errors so long as you keep up with the good work you are engaged in. There you sit, in your lonely grandeur-the only man in the country who dares to relate the plain, unvarnished truth about the motion picture business, and we can sit back and chortle at your daring. Boy! what a task you have. The most mis-used and abused industry in the world to-day; and you, the solitary and outstanding figure who dares to point out the glaring incompetence. Gee! You're a brave man; because I know your journal is not productive of dividends, and yet you've got the courage of your convictions to speak right out, no matter who it hurts—and all for the good and welfare and future of the industry. More power to you. May you live long and prosper.

PAUL GERSON.

Dear Paul: Thanks for pointing out my mistake. As an exchange of courtesies may I point out that your "no matter who it hurts" should read "no matter whom it hurts"? -W. B.

WRITER AND DIRECTOR

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Two issues, and your plea, have made me decide that I may as well switch from the newsstand to the mailman.

Naturally, this means that I like your sheet; but you have one fetish that I do not, and to which I would like to take exception: that the director is a far less important factor in the making of a good picture than is

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the writer; that with a good script, any old director can make a good picture.

In the creation of any work of art there are, it seems to me, two basic processes: conception and expression. As the conception can not be ours until it has been expressed, the second process is as essential as the first. A writer can not possibly give complete expression to a picture—he does not handle it in its final medium. He has indicated what should be done, true; but can an inferior mind realize fully what is thus indicated? I don't think so. No mind but one equal to that which conceived can give full expression to any conception. Unrealized, what is the worth of any conception?

And if the two are equal? Every true work of art is the expression of an individual; and the stronger the individual, the stronger the work. If our director has as strong an indi-viduality as our writer, can he abide strictly by the latter's script? Of course not! His one desire is to give expression to himself. It is, of course, necessary that one mind hold the supreme authority, lest we get only a house divided; yet if one process is placed above the other, the submerged one can not realize fully its potentiality.

It seems to me obvious, therefore, that the writer and director of a picture should be one and the same person.

DUNHAM THORP.

PUTTING US RIGHT

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Apropos of your comments on The King of Kings in the current issue of The Film Spectator, I am taking the liberty of expressing my surprise and disappointment at several historical inaccuracies contained in your remarks.

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magazine has generally exhibited so high a grade of intelligence, that it can not but be a cause of regret, if not of disillusionment, to your dis-criminating readers to find you guilty of lapses that are inexcusable in one who assumes to speak with authority. The effect is not unlike that produced by the blunder which you yourself cite-the case of a movie gentleman who fails to remove his hat in a drawing-room.

You speak of the Gospel according to the Apostles. What you evidently mean, is the Gospel according to the Evangelists. Only two of the Gospels were written by Apostles-Matthew and John. Mark and Luke were not Apostles. Luke, a Greek physician, never even saw Jesus.

You lampoon De Mille for picturing Caiaphas and his political henchmen as alone responsible for the death of Jesus-a fact to which the Gospel records abundantly testify—and yet at the same time you find fault with the picture for not holding strictly to the Gospel narrative.

You refer incidentally to the burning of witches in Salem. Witches were never burned in Salem, nor anywhere else in America. A few of them were hanged. But the burning of these cratures was strictly a European pastime during the Middle Ages.

You say you hold no grudge against the French because their ancestors burned Joan of Arc at the stake. It was the English, and not the French,

who roasted this young lady.
You say that the portion of the post extending above the transverse beam of Jesus's cross was not attached to the cross until after Jesus was nailed to it. How did you ever come to imagine anything like that?

CLIFFORD HOWARD.

WHAT PRICE NAMES?

Dear Sir:

Madame Louella O. Parsons, motion picture editor of the Los Angeles Examiner, indorsed, a few days ago, in her columns, Mr. Tom Terris's statements regarding the salaries paid by motion picture companies in Russia, where a good actor receives seventy-five dollars a week.

To-day, Madame Louella O. Parsons takes the cudgel against the "cut" in California, shields (of course) the 400 of Hollywood and declares war on unknown players "who might be groomed for big parts in order to bring about necessary economic reforms."

Cut or no cut, I hold that certain stars and leading actors, having obviously and repeatedly exposed their incompetency for the screen, should be warned to make room for better fitted players. One wonders how these former clerks and voiceless chorus girls ever got to stardom. They are imposed on the public who, after being cheated once, never wants to see again the pale phenomenon announced outside in electric letters.

It is absurd and untrue to say that the public must have "names". The

public wants a good picture, nothing else.

Undoubtedly we have in Hollywood a dozen stars endowed with undeniable talent. They earned their actual situation—as true artists do—by sheer ability and faith. But, we have also in this bombastic and artificial village, a good number of mongrels, toadies, dumbbells, quacks and would-be actors with "names", who should be invited to return at once to kitchens, stores, beauty parades, circuses and soda fountain counters, where they belong.

As for the "unknown player", allow me once again, Madame Louella O. Parsons, to enlighten you. He or she is not necessarily unable because unknown. You have probably never heard of Ivan Moskvine, of Poli-kouska, Eugene Klopfer, Rheinhold Schunzel, Rudolf Kleine-Rogge? They are nevertheless remarkable stage and motion picture actors. And have we not seen recently, a little girl, Miss Jeanet Gaynor (absolutely unknown six months ago) justly rewarded by her own effort?

Was the much abused public informed about this little girl before Seventh Heaven? No. However, I hear that Miss Gaynor's salary is microscopic compared to the salaries given to several other women of considerably less ability and charm.

I know certain actors "without names" starving in Hollywood, who are perfectly able to satisfy the public (they have proved it) for one-tenth of the amount actually paid to impostors.

To have a "name" is not always a question of talent. Very often it is a question of money.

JULES RAUCOURT.

TWO OTHER LISTS

Dear Mr. Beaton:

As per your suggestion in the last Spectator, I have compiled a list of the ten best and ten worst pictures of the year so far. To date I have seen ninety-six movies-most of them bad -and many of which I have reviewed for the Hollywood Filmograph. My list is as follows:

THE TEN BEST OF THE YEAR TO DATE

The King of Kings (Spectator to the contrary, notwithstanding), Resurrection, White Gold, Camille, The Beloved Rogue, The Scarlet Letter, Mr. Wu, Hotel Imperial, Lovers, Children of Divorce. (I have not seen Seventh Heaven, or it would doubtless be near the top of the list.)

THE TEN WORST OF THE YEAR TO DATE

The First Auto, Bertha the Sewing Machine Girl, Tillie the Toiler, Altars of Desire, Framed, Bitter Apples, Dance Magic, Topsy and Eva, Sorrows of Satan, Notorious Lady.

And now I would like to add my opinion of the ten best performances

of the year to date:

H. B. Warner in The King of Kings, John Gilbert in Flesh and the Devil, Dolores Del Rio in Resurrection, Joseph Schildkraut in The King of Kings, Louise Dresser in White Flan-nels, John Barrymore in The Beloved Rogue, Pola Negri in Hotel Imperial, Rod La Rocque in Resurrection, Rudolph Schildkraut in The King of Kings, Lon Chaney in Mr. Wu.

Incidentally, do you think it quite fair to repeatedly speak of Dearie as one of the worst pictures of the year, just because someone has told you it is bad, when you haven't even seen it? As a matter of fact, it is very pleasing, and the preview audience

was quite enthusiastic.

The Spectator is improving with every issue. The only thing needed to make it perfect is your son Donald's column again. Here's hoping he will soon be well.

JANET ELSIE CLARK.

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FILM SPECTATOR

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Vol. 3

Hollywood, California, August 6, 1927

No. 12

The Story of the Box-Office

Producers should keep their hands off production.

Directors to be of little importance in future.

Properly prepared scripts will remedy faulty cutting.

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CIAL DELIVERT

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THE UNKNOWN

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STORY OF THE BOX-OFFICE

By NORMAN WEBB

EDITOR'S NOTE.—The percentages after the pictures listed below indicate amount of capacity business they have played to throughout the United

States and Canada. As soon as possible the foreign returns will be included.

In five or six instances, pictures are listed over 100%. This indicates that
these pictures have broken house records all over the country and beaten the

former house capacity business.

Production costs have not been taken into consideration, as this does not particularly matter at the box office. For example, there is one production listed at 77%, The Lone Wolf Returns, that cost less than \$45,000 to produce, while another production that cost over \$700,000, The Greater Glory, has dropped as low as 72%.

The pictures listed herewith include all feature releases for the past

eighteen months that were of enough importance to get key-city runs and hold up fairly well. This naturally eliminates Westerns and second and third rate

productions.

The road shows are listed in order, according to the biggest grosses and length of run. When road shows are released generally, they are withdrawn from that list and placed on the percentage list.

In the next Spectator will be published percentage columns showing the relative standing of supervisors, directors, writers, stars and featured players.

PRODUCTIONS RELEASED SINCE JANUARY, 1926

		70 1 TO 1 TO 1 CT			To 1 To 1	0.0		D 11	
	- 1	Big ParadeRoad Sl	now		Blonde or Brunette	84	136	Rookies	74
	2		46	69	Orchids and Ermine	82	137	Telephone Girl	74
	3	Don Juan "	44	70	Orchids and Ermine Strong Man	82	138	Is Zat So?	74
	- 4	What P'ce Glory "	**	71	Classified	82	139	Monte Cristo, re-issue	7.4
	7		66		Clida Valla Clida	01		Control College	77
		Deau Geste	44	72	Slide, Kelly Slide Beverly of Graustark	01	140	Captain Salvation	. /4
	6	King of Kings.,		73	Beverly of Graustark.	81	141	Michael Strogoffff	74
	7		44	74	Hold That Lion	81	142	Getting Gertie's Garter	74
	8	Old Ironsides "	4.6	75	Tramp, Tramp, Tramp Duchess of Buffalo	80	143	Fig Leaves	
	9		44	76	Duchese of Ruffalo	80	144	Agence the Donish	74
		Apple Taurie	44		E CI di di	00		Across the Pacific	74
	10	Aunie Laurie	44	77	Evening Clothes		145	You'd Be Surprised	74
	11	** IIIKS		78	Children of Divorce	80	146	Altars of Desire	74
	12	Son of Sheik	111	79	Dancing Mothers	80	147	Wet Paint	
	13		110	80	Gigolo	80	148	Flaming Forest	
	14			81	Gigolo	90		Social Celebrity	7 3
					Ol Mill	00	149	Social Celebrity	/3
	15	Flesh and the Devil	105	82	Oh, What a Nurse		150	Canadian, The	73
	16		103	83	Kid Boots		151	Vanishing American	73
-	17	Kid Brother	102	84	Tin Gods	79	152	Let's Get Married	73
		Tell It to Marines		85	Bat		153		7 2
	19	Marry Midow	100	86	Show, The	70	154	Daniel of Hannel	73
		Merry Midow Stella Dallas	100		Rough House Rosie	77		Brown of Harvard	13
	20	Stella Dallas	100	87	Rough House Rosie	79	155	Jim, the Conqueror Eagle of the Sea	73
	21	It	99	88	It Must Be Love	79	156	Eagle of the Sea	73
	22	La Boheme	96	89	Twinkletoes	79	157	Underst. Heart, The	73
	23	For Heaven's Sake		90	Gr. Duchess and Wtr.		158	Blackbird The	72
	24							Blackbird, The	/3
		Night of Love		91	Senorita	/0	159	Nell Gwyn	73
	25	Camille		92	Tin Hats	78	160	Sea Tiger	73
	26	Behind the Front	94	93	Waning Sex	78	161	Just Another Blonde	7.3
	27	Volga Boatman	9.3	94	Knockout Reilly		162	Mlle. Modiste	73
	28	Sea Beast		95	Priv. Izzy Murphy			Venus of Venice	72
		Dandala -	23				103	venus of venice	/3
	49	Dardeleys	92	96	Stranded in Paris	78	164	Tender Hour	72
	30	Bardeleys The Better 'Ole	91	97	Subway Sadie	78	165	Don Juan's 3 Nights Prince of Tempters	72
	31	Temptress	91	98	Ella Cinders	78	166	Prince of Tempters	72
	32	Annie Roonie	91	99	Synconating Sue	77	167	Into Her Kingdom	73
	33	Quarterhaal	01	100	Syncopating Sue	77		There Have	76
		Quarterback	91		Allair of Follies	//	168	Three Hours	72
	34	Winning Barb. Worth		101	Taxi Dancer		169	White Gold	72
	35	Dark Angel		102	Red Mill		170	Afraid to Love	72
	36	Missing Link	90	103	Demi-Bride	77	171	Johnny, Get Hair Cut Masked Bride	72
	37	Four Horsemen, reis	90	104	Lone Wolf Returns	77	172	Macked Bride	72
	38	L. Windemere's Fan	00	105			172	Don't Tell the Wife	74
					Faust	77	1/3	Don't Lell the Wite	14
	39	Mr. Wu	89	106	Popular Sin	//	174	Aloma of South Seas	72
	40	Mare Nostrum	89	107	Padlocked	77	175	What Happ'd to Jones	72
	41	Fine Manners	88	108		77	176	Midnight Sun	72
4	42	Eagle		109	Wolf's Clothing	77	177	Blonda Spint	71
	43	Kiki		110	Cradle Snatchers	76	178	Blonde Saint	41
					Tillian de	70		White Black Sheep	71
	44	McFadden's Flats		111	Tillie, the Toller	10	179	Lady in Ermine	71
	45	Scarlet Letter		112	Tillie, the Toiler	76	180	Wilderness Woman	71
4	46	Chang	86	113	Paradise for Two	76	181	Bluebeard's 7 Wives	71
	47	Sorrows of Satan	85	114	Third Degree		182	Cabaret	71
4	48	Metropolis		115	Rosie O'Grady		183	M. Official 11776	71
		Unhola Thans	03		Can Ta A:-	70			/1
	77	Unholy Three Three Faces East Three Bad Men	83	116	Say It Again Kosher Kitty Kelly	76	184	Waltz DreamLove 'Em, Leave 'Em	71
	50	Inree Faces East	85	117	Kosher Kitty Kelly	76	185	Love 'Em, Leave 'Em.,	71
	51	Three Bad Men	85	118	Variety	76	186	You Never Know Wom.	71
	52	Valencia	85	119	Show-Off	76		Mike	
	53	Campus Flirt			His People	76	100	Paises Call T.	71
	54						100	Frisco Sally Levy	70
		Ace of Cads	85	121	Loves of Sunya	15	189	Ankles Preferred	70
	5 5	Beloved Rogue	85	122	New York	75	190	Wedding Bills	70
5	56	Irene	85	123	Sparrows	75	191	Return of P. Grim	70
	57	Resurrection	84	124	Let It Rain				
		Cohns and Kellys	84	125	Battling Butler	75	103	Blind Alleys	70
					Cal Carra Mar 20	73	193	Fast and Furious	70
		The Unknown		126	God Gave Me 20c		194	Little Journey	70
6	00	Casey at Bat	84	127	So This Is Paris	7 5	195	Blind Goddess	70
		Men of Steel		128	Sandy	75			
					Amateur Gentleman	75	190	Devil's Circus	10
		Rough Riders			Just Suppose			Cheerful Fraud	
6	53	Hotel Imperial	83					The General	
6		Mantrap			Forever After				
					Lost at the Front			Special Delivery	
		The Midshipman		133	Reckless Lady	74	200	Ransom's Folly	70
6	6	Torrent, The	82	134	Great Deception	74		Infatuation	
		His Secretary		135	Lovers	74			
			J.	100		, 4	402	Long Pants	10
	-								

It is especially interesting to note that practically all of the biggest box office successes have at least one big

Since Don Juan, Beau star name. Geste and Annie Laurie are now being released generally throughout the country, they shortly will be withdrawn from the road show class and

placed on the percentage list.

Of all the road shows, Seventh
Heaven is probably the most remarkable, for several reasons: First, because its production cost was not too high; second, because it has no big star names in the cast; and third, because it is building so rapidly at the box office. It is of special interest to note that Seventh Heaven is Frank Borzage's first big success since The Lady, starring Norma Talmadge, which he directed four years ago for Joe Schenck. The trade shows of Seventh Heaven, in London, Paris and Berlin, have been so successful that this picture promises to duplicate its success abroad.

On the other hand, Old Ironsides seems to be the biggest flop among the road shows. With its gigantic production cost and very short runs all over the country, it is no wonder that Jesse Lasky wants to cut salaries. This is the second road show flop from Paramount this season, the other being The Rough Riders. But since the latter's production cost was only half of the former, it is not such a black

eye to the Paramount organization.

Beau Geste, which has held fifth among the road shows, is the real life-saver among the Paramount road shows. Although this production was filmed on the California desert, credit must go to the Famous Players' Eastern studio, which sponsored the production, and especially to Walter Wanger, the originator; William Le Baron, the supervisor; Herbert Brenon, the director, and Paul Schofold the grangist field, the scenarist.

Evidently the Ben Schulberg regime at the Western studio is much more successful with program pictures than with road shows, and espe-cially the series starring Beery-Hatton, Clara Bow, Adolphe Menjou,

and Bebe Daniels.

Follow THE STORY of the BOX-OFFICE

In Each Issue of The Film Spectator

It will give you more accurate, complete and enlightening information on the industry than you can glean from all other screen publications combined.

Universal Pictures Corporation

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UNIVERSAL CITY, CALIFORNIA

July 22nd, 1927

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Charle Logue

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EVERY OTHER SATURDAY

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WELFORD BEATON, President and Editor

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Three dollars per inch, per insertion, 13-em column. The Editor's comments are in 20-em columns, one and one-half times the width of our advertising columns, hence the 20-em rate is four and one-half dollars per inch.

Subscription price, \$3.50 per year; foreign, \$4.50. Single copy, 15 cents.

The only publication conducted solely for those who THINK about motion pictures.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, AUGUST 6, 1927

IN THE NEXT SPECTATOR

Norman Webb's department, "The Story of the Box Office," which begins in this number, will in the next Spectator reveal the box office rating of supervisors, writers, directors, stars, and featured players. His tables will give you at a glance just how the public during the past eighteen months has received the individual efforts of those who make our pictures. Norman Webb does not guess at things; he lets his percentage columns tell their own story. He and The Spectator for the past year have been co-operating in developing the most elaborate system ever devised to place before the motion picture industry the exact value in dollars and cents that its prominent people are to it. The rating of the different individuals is established by a compilation of box office returns received from all over the world.

The Big Banquet at the Biltmore

NFORTUNATELY my invitation to the Biltmore banquet did not arrive, therefore I can not base any comments on first hand knowledge of what transpired at it. In any event, I would not be able to get such comment in this Spectator, which had to be in type the morning after the love feast, and even if the Academy had not forgotten to ask me I would not have sat up all night to write about it. At my leisure I will sift the reports that come to me and comment on them in the next Spectator. I do hope the Academy will not think that I am put out over its failure to invite me to eat up some of its funds. Really, I am flattered immensely by the incident. Representatives of all other film papers, all of which continue to publish only by grace of the advertising of producers, were invited, as well as the representatives of the dailies, which must treat pictures leniently to protect their picture theatre advertising. I feel that the fact that The Spectator was the only paper not on the invitation list is a tribute to its independence, and is the industry's formal recognition of the fact that even a good dinner could not influence its views. It likewise is the industry's acknowledgment of the fact that it does not want honest criticism of its methods. If anyone high up in the Academy had been possessed of a sense of humor he would have seen to it that I was invited. It would have put me up against it. I did not want to go, but I would have had to, so that it would not appear as if I did not want to hear both sides of the case. Knowing as I do the real story of why the salary cut was called off, I have derived considerable amusement from the contemplation of the adroit manner in which the producers used the Academy as a cloak to cover their retreat. I have not told the story in The Spectator, as I did not wish to interfere with the progress of the negotiations, but I will relate it in the next issue. Thus far in its career the Academy has been a stout friend of the producers, although it was not aware at all times that such was the case. There are five branches of the Academy. For four of them The Spectator has fought as valiantly as it could. It has opposed the contentions of but one branch, the producers. The Academy as a whole does not recognize The Spectator at a time when it asks all other film publications to be represented at a gathering. The only time that four members of a gang will not recognize a friend is when the man who dominates them is mad at him. It would please the producers to ignore The Spectator, and apparently they are strong

CONSIDER THE LILIES

Can a business man make pictures?
Or can a bullfrog sing?
Or can a wart-hog circle
Aloft on airy wing?

Each to his own endowments;
The sea hath its metes and bounds,
Nor can a dachshund travel
With the swiftly coursing hounds.

Let's not criticize too harshly The vocalizing frog, Or his contemporary beastie, The unaesthetic hog.

And though their blah conceptions May sometimes get our goat: On the trip of evolution They may have missed the boat.

Think of Shakespeare's genius, Iscariot's itching palm— Can you reconcile the ocean With the noxious bayou's calm?

The one transcends emotions
With its myriad varied moods;
The other, life's precedent,
O'er former glory broods.

Embalmed in ancient precedent
It garners moss and slime,
Croaks the bullfrog to the wart-hog:
"The production is sublime!"

But the ocean-wide emotions Of sentient human hearts Can derive small inspiration From the bayou's ancient arts.

On our devious pathways upward
We demand a wider view
Than the bullfrog and the wart-hog
In the moss-grown old bayou.

-GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN.

enough in the Academy to make it do things to please them. But perhaps The Spectator was ignored because the Academy does not think it important enough to be recognized. If so, I wish it would write me a letter to that effect. It would be a good comeback, and I have sufficient sense of humor to lead me to publish the letter.

Producers Think They Are Supermen

NE of the main obstacles to the institution of reforms that must come to pictures before they will become better, is the individual producer's conception of his own importance. We never will have better pictures until we have better producers. The men whose inefficiency has created the present situation will not view complacently the institution of reforms that will eliminate them, yet their practical elimination is necessary before the screen can improve its status either as an art or as an industry. I do not mean that our producing organizations must be rendered headless. There must be in charge of them men of great business ability. Some of our present producers have such ability. Schenck, who rose from a newsboy to what he is to-day; Lasky, who was an unimportant vaudeville agent; Laemmle, who was in clothing business; Mayer, who made buttonholes—these men could not have achieved their present fame and fortunes if they were not extraordinary individuals possessing ability that has been denied the rest of us. It is by the woeful inefficiency of these and other men with similar careers that pictures have been brought to the verge of bankruptcy, but to dismiss them as being entirely devoid of common sense is to leave unexplained the fact that they earned legitimately huge fortunes that we, their critics, envy. You first must argue away Joe Schenck's many millions before you can argue away the fact that he has something to think with. But in acquiring the millions through the exercise of his business shrewdness, Joe acquired a conviction, which, when multiplied by the number of other producers, has brought the screen industry to its present pass: he convinced himself that it was not his commercial sense that made him successful; that it was his Godgiven artistic gifts, his ability to judge story value, to pick actors, to say what should compose a motion picture. Despite the fact that it has been proven both financially and artistically that our present producers know nothing about making motion pictures, getting them to accept the proof is going to be the greatest obstacle to the screen's emancipation. During the past few weeks there has been brought to light in Hollywood an amazing array of facts which reveal the utter incompetency of the producers, yet during all that time they have been bowing and smiling, and have been unbending graciously to give ear to their employees; and expressing through the newspapers their appreciation of the charming time they were having in the Biltmore conferences. It has been a spectacle to make the gods laugh. A man's sense of humor diminishes in the degree that the sense of his own importance rises; our motion picture millionaires are wholly egotistical, hence they have no sense of humor and could not appreciate the delicious comedy they were staging. Both on the screen and on Wall Street they were indicted for incompetency. and at the Biltmore they assembled their cohorts about their feet and jovially enquired, "What is this thing that we are guilty of?" Never for a moment did they appear chastened, nor reveal by the straightening of a smile that they were on trial after they had been found guilty. How they emerge from the conferences I do not know at this writing, but that the sense of their own infallibility has been lessened in the slightest degree I do not for one moment believe. Before he entered the conferences Joe Schenck was convinced that he was a great judge of screen literature. I am confident that he came from them with that conviction undisturbed. And the same goes for all the rest of them, despite the fact that if they knew anything whatever of screen literature the conferences would not have been held.

FFICERS of a manufacturing company need not

Also They Think They Know Stories

know anything of the process by which its product is made. John B. Miller, president of the Southern California Edison Company, a concern so big that it has under way the most gigantic construction proposition ever undertaken in the world, would not recognize a kilowatt if one perched on the corner of his desk. He knows nothing about electricity. But he knows men, and has assembled in his organization some of the best electrical engineers in the country. He pays them to make electricity and leaves them alone while they are making it. The man at the head of his public relations department, really the selling department, knows nothing about electricity. All he knows is how to get people to buy it, and he does not concern himself with its making. Louis B. Mayer, Jesse Lasky, Joseph M. Schenck, Sol Wurtzel-I could go all the way down the list-know nothing whatever about how a picture should be made, but there all their resemblance to John B. Miller ceases. They think they know all about it. As a result of this obsession they have been called on the carpet by Wall Street and lectured upon getting the motion picture industry into an almost hopeless mess. If as they enter Wall Street they pass a man emerging from it with a great many millions of dollars under each arm, and with bankers trotting after him trying to get him to take more, they will discover if they look closely that the man is John B. Miller, who is wise enough to know just where his knowledge of his own business ceases. Not only do our big producers know nothing about making pictures, but they have not sense enough to hire executives with such knowledge. They have people on their pay-rolls who know the manufacturing end of the business, but they are not allowed to exercise their knowledge. Even under a strictly reformed regime there would be a place in pictures for the Laskys, Schencks and Mayers if they could be made to see their limitations. They are needed to handle the big financial problems, and in that capacity could be of value to the industry. But as long as they cling to their present conviction that they know pictures, just so long will the business be as crazy as it is now. Six months or so ago I very nearly became a producer for United Artists. Joe Schenck and I quickly settled all the preliminary points of the contract, after which I submitted synopses of three original screen stories, and was all het up over the prospect of being a big producer with a most distinguished release. If I know anything at all about pictures I know, that each of the stories could be made into a picture with

great box office strength. But Joe passed on the stories himself. He said the first he read in brief synopsis form was "old fashioned". This, mind you, before a treatment was suggested. He could not grasp the possibilities of any of the stories, and could not present one intelligent reason for not liking them. I asked him to let me go over the stories with a trained literary man who knew something about pictures, but my request was not granted. Shortly after my aspirations were squelched Schenck gave the world his conception of real screen entertainment, Topsy and Eva, unquestionably the worst motion picture ever made. I am not claiming that my stories weren't rotten. Perhaps they were. But if they were, a man who knows anything about screen stories would have been able to give at least one sensible reason why they were. I am confident that Sol Wurtzel is so fixed in his conviction that he knows all about screen literary material that nothing on earth could change his mind. I believe the same is true of Lasky and Mayer. But the truth is that none of them knows the first thing about screen stories. If they did they wouldn't have heard from Wall Street.

All Must Come to Perfect Scripts

NLY by the ignorance of producers and their supervisors of the essentials of screen literature could the present situation have been brought about. They have taken this literary art out of the hands of literary people and messed it up until Wall Street roared and frightened them. Even then they did not reveal by anything they did that they knew what it was all about. They were as helpless in locating the trouble as they were in creating it. As I write this the conferences are still in progress and I do not know what will come of them, but before this Spectator goes to press there may be developments which I will discuss in later paragraphs. That the industry will benefit spiritually from an exchange of ideas and the contact of producers with their employees may be presumed, but I believe that the views of all parties to the conferences are too divergent, and their selfish interests naturally too antagonistic, to get on the same track and lead logically to a solution. Producers are too arrogant to yield what they consider to be their divine rights; the importance of directors has been exaggerated until they have lost their sense of perspective; supervisors are fighting for their existence in an industry that they only can harm instead of help; actors believe that the whole industry rests on their shoulders, and writers have starved so long that they can give utterance only to emaciated conclusions. Yet all these divergent forces are drawn to a common point in the hope that Wall Street can be appeased thereby. The most important people in the meetings are those that all the others will agree are the least important—the writers. There is not one activity of the industry that does not have its inception in the thought of an author. To the extent that the industry has wandered away from this truth has 'it become lost in the fog of inefficiency, extravagance and waste. The more quickly it gets back to it the sooner will all its ills be cured. Some of the greatest writers in the world have come to Hollywood to sell their brains to motion pictures, only to be appalled by the crass ignorance and uncouth arrogance they encountered. Pictures lost them, but could regain them if producers had brains

enough to realize their value. Nothing that can come out of the Biltmore conferences, nothing that producers can do to put the industry on a sound basis, can do any lasting good unless it be the single determination to have perfect scripts. As I remarked in the last Spectator, perfect scripts automatically cure every evil that the industry now suffers. When Louis B. Mayer was busy at the conferances, Twelve Miles Out, one of his pictures, went on view. There was not a shot of Betty Compson in it, although she received a salary of five thousand dollars a week for working in it. Does Mayer have to go down to the Biltmore and call the entire industry into consultation to discover how such a criminal waste of money is possible? Does he lack sufficient mentality to grasp the fact that if enough time had been spent on the script from which Twelve Miles Out was shot, the process of making it perfect would have revealed that the scenes in which Betty appeared had no place in the story; that they would have been eliminated before shooting began, thereby saving the many thousands of dollars that the crazy script was instrumental in wasting? The mere fact that the conferences were called makes me believe that no lasting good will come of them. The thought that they were necessary betrays a blindness too deep to be penetrated by anything that could be brought out at them. The object of them was to devise a plan to reduce the cost of production. Only perfect scripts will do that. They will do everything from attracting more money to the box office to reducing the force of men necessary to the operation of the studio planing mills. Lumber won't be used in sets that have been eliminated from scripts.

Easy to Write Perfect Script

NLY a moment's consideration of the importance of perfect scripts should convince even the stupidest producer that he need consider nothing else. We start with several facts that are granted: pictures themselves are on the down grade; they cost too much; overhead is high; studios are overmanned. The first fact may be divided into poor stories, weak continuity, unconvincing acting, faulty editing and inane titles. As we have throughout the world plenty of authors who can write good stories it seems logical to charge poor ones on the screen to the studio's inability to select its literary material, or to bring intelligence to bear on its treatment after it is selected. The natural tendency of a perfect script policy will be the development of authors who will be attracted to Hollywood and who soon will master the technic of writing directly for the screen. With the assistance of trained continuity writers they will submit their stories in correct form for shooting, as the novelist submits his manuscript in correct form for publication. It will be as easy for the screen writer to do this as it is for the novelist, or as it is for an engineer to design a bridge, or an architect to draw plans for a building. But your screen author will have to know camera angles, protests the director. He will learn them. But he will have to understand lighting. He will learn it. He will learn all that he needs to learn. It is ridiculous to contend that there is anything about the making of a motion picture that a supervisor or director can grasp, but which is beyond the mental reach of a brain big enough to conceive a story. Litera-

ture has its authors and the stage its dramatists. The task of the screen writer is simpler and easier to perform than that of the novelist or dramatist. In a novel the hardest parts to write are the descriptions. It is not necessary to write them in screen plays. The hardest task of the dramatist is to bring his characters together logically in the settings of the various acts. On the screen it is not necessary to do this as the camera can follow the characters anywhere. Literature is not starving for authors nor the stage for dramatists. It is unlikely, then, that the screen will lack its competent authors after it has made a place for them. They will write logical and entertaining stories and all of their logic and entertainment will reach the public. The scripts will be prepared in a manner that will permit every person connected with the production to know exactly what he is doing. The director will shoot the script as it is written, and when it calls for a scene to be shown in a medium shot it will be shot that way and not also in a long shot and a close-up. An able second to producer inefficiency in squandering money is directorial stupidity in throwing it away in "protection" shots. When we have perfect scripts we will have directors who know their jobs well enough to need no protection. A really capable director even under the present ignorant method of making pictures has no excuse for shooting every scene three times. Each scene appears in a picture only once and it should be shot the way it is going to appear. We have very few directors now who are sure enough of themselves to make pictures properly. The rest will have to learn, or adopt some other means of livelihood. Just as the perfect script policy will bring a lot of capable authors to Hollywood, so also will it bring into being a new crop of directors who will do to-morrow every sensible thing that our present directors say can not be done to-day.

Director to Be of Little Importance

F ALL the arguments against the importance of the perfect script the one that has the least merit is that it will curb the director, that if he be made to shoot a script exactly as it is written he will be denied the opportunity to express himself on the screen. Instead of this being an argument against perfect scripts, I regard it as one of the big reasons why we should have them. At present directors are not curbed in their expression. They express themselves three times in each scene, in a close-up, a medium shot and a long shot. They express themselves with characters and in scenes which do not reach the screen. They express themselves in from twice to ten times the footage in which their boiled-down expression must finally be released. Putting an end to such ridiculous excesses is the greatest benefit that the perfect script will confer on screen art. Up to date all that directors taken as a whole have demonstrated is that they do not know how to make pictures. Every time a director shoots the same scene from three distances he confesses to his own incompetence. True, he will find that his script calls for such shots, but scripts to-day are based on the theory that the director is incompetent, although script writers have no conscious thought that their work is based on such a theory. There is no more reason why two scenes should be shot when there is a place in the picture for only one

than there is why two windows should be constructed when there is a hole in a wall for only one. "But we want several scenes from which to select the best one," it will be argued. Exactly the same argument could be advanced by the window-maker, but as houses are constructed sanely he must make his window perfect in the first attempt. I'll grant you that we have very few directors who can make a perfect scene in one attempt, but that is an argument in favor of new directors, not a reason why the incompetence of the present ones should be indulged. If you viewed pictures as I have to, with the single idea of appraising them as works of art, you would be more conscious even than you are now of how deplorable the state of the art has become. The condition has been reached because we have allowed directors too much freedom in expressing themselves; because we allow the scenarist, the film editor and the title writer also to take a hand in the expression. And what are all of them trying to express? Something created by an author. Then why not allow the author to express himself? What right have any of the others to try to express him? By attempting to they have reduced screen art to the level of the gutter, and by the freedom given them are sacrificing on the altar of their inefficiency many millions of dollars that belong rightfully to the shareholders of the companies for which they work. The power of expression must be taken from these people who so emphatically have manifested their inability to exercise it, and given to the only man whom logic points to as the one in whose keeping it will be exercised wisely: the author. Never will we have the products of this literary art made either economically or well until literary minds dominate its creations. There always will be some directors, possibly a dozen, whose abilities will make them figures of importance in screen art, but they will be notable for the masterly manner in which they express what was in the authors' minds. The scores of other directors will be unimportant people, with ability only to put on the screen what they see on paper. I do not blame directors for arguing against perfect scripts. Self preservation always has been the first law of nature. But another law is that what is inherently sound in any given thing ultimately will assert itself. That is the irresistible force that is pushing the director into the background.

Many Improvements That Will Be Made

PPORTUNITIES to ruin a picture in the cuttingroom will not be so numerous when they are shot properly. The spectacle of a film editor giving his version of a story, and later of a title writer giving his, and an entirely new version of it, will be a thing of the past. Every scene and every title having its place in the script, the cutter merely will follow instructions-and there won't be any title writer, for no one on the lot would presume to change a word written by the author. It is agreed that H. L. Mencken is an authority on the English language. He asked me for an article for the September number of the American Mercury. I sent it to him and when the proof came back to me I found that one of my sentences had been altered by him. I wrote him that I preferred it the way I had written it originally and I received from him a letter in which he said he had re-

stored my original language. He did not argue the point; he still must feel that his change strengthened the sentence, but he recognizes that the article is mine and that I have a right to express myself as I see fit even in his magazine. So it will be with pictures. The editing, then, will be speedy, and as the takes will be chosen during shooting, the picture, properly titled, should be ready for its first showing a day or two after shooting ends. The shooting schedule will be prepared as carefully as an engineer's specifications for a bridge. Again every man will know exactly what he is doing. A man who had something to do with the making of Gloria Swanson's last picture in the East writes me that a player was brought from Hollywood, was on the pay-roll for thirteen weeks, and all we see of him in the picture could have been shot in part of one day. There will be no more of that when we have perfect scripts. The saving in salaries will be enormous, but even so, the salaries will amount to a greater percentage of production cost than they do now, on account of the tremendous saving there will be in all other directions. Only sets that appear on the screen will be erected, making it possible to reduce studio staffs. Perfect scripts will eliminate supervisors almost entirely. There will be exceptions. Eric Pommer, although I think he made a very poor picture out of After Midnight, always will be a big figure, for he has an extraordinary picture mind and can guide even the best authors and directors towards better productions. But he will have to become efficient and spend his time on scripts before shooting begins, and not after, something, for all I know to the contrary, he may be doing now. But those supervisors who ruin so many pictures now will disappear from Hollywood. The scripts will contain carefully drawn characterizations and we will have, as a consequence, real people on the screen instead of the sticks who swarm upon it now. There will be much more acting that is acting than we see at present. And perfect scripts will confer another boon on pictures: they will tend to remove from it the close-up curse. No writer would be ass enough to include as many close-ups as directors and film editors give us now because they lack sufficient intelligence to tell a story capably without them. But as economy is the all-absorbing topic in film circles now, the fact that only by having perfect scripts can we have economically made pictures is the important matter. The artistic improvement of pictures would be incidental. Like the eight-hour day and the standard forms of contracts, perfect scripts are inevitable. Those who say all three, or any one of them, can not be made to fit screen conditions do not know what they are talking about. Such people, however, constitute a large proportion of the population of Hollywood, and we must get rid of them before pictures will come into their own.

Extravagance of Buying a Name

NE extravagance that Mr. Lasky might ponder over is the habit he has of paying enormous salaries to people whose fame is confined to Broadway, his assumption being that if they are called by their first names in the Lambs Club the people of Walla Walla are craving their presence on the screen. Take Eddie Cantor as an example. He has a following in New York and it must take a tidy salary to bring him to Hollywood. If he

possessed qualifications as a screen comedian, and if Paramount had a part that only he could play, it would be all right for Lasky to overlook the many comedians who already have their homes established here, and secure Cantor's services. But as far as I can judge Cantor by what I have seen him do on the screen he is not half so funny as any one of a score of slapstick comedians who always bore me, and can not be included in the same thought with at least fifty of our legitimate comedians. Of course, Cantor may have more ability than he has been permitted to display thus far in his career as a Paramount star. Occasionally, perhaps, a sillier picture than Special Delivery may be produced, but it is so seldom that it can not be recalled without a severe mental struggle. It is obvious, therefore, that the services of Cantor are secured at great expense in the mistaken idea that his name will attract audiences no matter how trashy are the productions in which he is presented. That it is a fraud on the public does not seem to occur to anyone. When whatever pulling power his name has is ruined by the pictures in which he is starred another name can be secured and the same trick worked again. When Paramount allows clever people to write clever comedies and puts clever people in them, it need not worry about big names, for it would not be long before such offerings drew audiences because they were Paramount comedies. At present even Cantor, who has made two pictures, means more to an audience in Texas than Paramount itself, which has made two thousand. In all lines of business the name of a firm is its chief intangible asset; in pictures it means nothing whatever. Metro depends more on Karl Dane's name than upon its own to put a picture over. For all the hundreds of millions of dollars it has spent on production, Paramount has to bring a little known man like Eddie Cantor to Hollywood in the hope that his name will provide what its own name lacks: a reason why a person should see a picture. If from the first it had concentrated on its stories and had developed writers who could turn out perfect scripts, "Paramount" to-day would be the only word that it would be necessary to spell in electric lights over the entrance to a picture house. And the word would be worth scores of millions of dollars to its owners. To-day it is not worth as much as Jobyna Ralston's. When Cantor arrived here last winter and the press agents made much of the fact that he was writing his own story, I said in The Spectator that the story would be no good and the picture made from it worse. Special Delivery proves that my prophecy had merit. What story there is is silly, so silly that it would be sillier to make it the subject of serious criticism. Most of the picture is a succession of unrelated gags that lost their first bloom in pictures made years ago. There is an elevator gag that was a direct steal from something I saw so long ago that I can not recall its name. Having a piece of ice fall down Cantor's neck, causing him to win a black bottom contest in his efforts to dislodge it, is new. I'll have to give credit to Paramount for being up to date with it, for it is not more than two or three months since I saw it in another picture. That's snappy grabbing. When the story becomes serious it becomes asinine. Jobyna Ralston loves Cantor, but she is about to marry another man because he asked her to. That's the kind of story it is. I'd like to see Cantor in a real story. I'm curious to know if he can act.

"Mata-Hari" Is Notable Picture

NCE the Germans get into the habit of putting into all their pictures as much real screen talent as is displayed in Mata-Hari they are going to do one of two things: they are going to capture the film markets of the world, or they are going to force Americans to make better pictures. Mata-Hari is an intellectual treat. It is notable for its near-perfection in every feature that a picture contains-story-telling, acting, direction, lighting, photography, and sets. The story is told with neatness and dispatch. It slows up only when by doing so it becomes more impressive, and it travels along swiftly when it should. The action is carried along by dissolves from one sequence to another. We see Magda Sonja, in her dancing costume, bowing from the stage to the audience which stands and applauds her with up-stretched hands. We do not lose sight of the clapping hands as they change to those of people standing outside the stage door through which she comes, dressed for the street. It is an effective way of bridging an interval without any lost motion. Miss Sonja's performance is a remarkable one. She reveals that she had a deep understanding of the part. The suffering of her lover drives her to distraction, but when she herself is sentenced to death she takes it without a quiver of an eye-lash, just what we might expect from a notorious spy who knew at all times that death was but one of the hazards of the game she played. Fritz Kortner gives a magnificent performance. He puts his part over almost entirely with his eyes, relying but slightly on facial expression. Seldom has it been my good fortune to see a picture so superbly directed. It contains almost everything that The Spectator has argued should be in pictures. The star is sentenced to death and she has her back to the camera when she registers her reaction to it. Fancy that! All we see is her head going up, her chin raising. The director was not afraid to shoot the backs of all his characters. His grouping is at all times effective, but not in one scene is it obvious that it is done with the position of the camera in mind. We do not see a character walking into a scene and turning to face the camera, an infantile trick which so many of our directors perform. In Mata-Hari all the points are not registered by close-ups of faces. Both in long shots and in medium shots the bodies of the actors are allowed to play their parts in scenes, one of the things I have urged so often. One very effective shot shows nothing but the backs of the two characters in it, and it is the index finger of one of them that puts the scene over. There is a reason for each such scene. In this one a character is seated facing a wall and the other leans over his shoulder. Anyone in the room could see only their backs, hence the director shoots it that way. An American director would have torn out the wall and shot close-ups of the men's faces, despite the fact that such a view of them was not possible to anyone. The man who plays opposite the star appears in the picture in a night exterior, wrapped in a big fur coat. We do not discover who he is until near the end of the sequence, when he enters his house and takes off the coat. By our American method of introducing our leading characters he would have paused long enough in his task of rescuing the lady to be shot in a close-up while he gazed at the moon. Mata-Hari is free from every movie trick

that we work to death. In importing this picture Walter Kofeldt has done a distinct service to Hollywood. The only thing in it that does not reveal the highest intelligence is the only thing in it that Hollywood contributed, the punctuation of the titles. It was so bad that one would have thought that the picture was made here if the rest of it had not been so good.

"World at Her Feet" An Entertaining Thing

UITE an entertaining little picture is The World at Her Feet, starring Florence Vidor and directed by Luther Reed. Reed has demonstrated before that he is at home with a picture of this sort, and its faults are more faults of the script than of the direction. Miss Vidor neglects her husband, Arnold Kent, to pursue her career as a lawyer, and his discontent with the life he is forced to lead is built up logically and convincingly. The star's characterization is consistent. She is shown as being expert in her law practice at handling other people's troubles, and when she has domestic troubles of her own she is equally as capable in handling them. She gives a good performance and I like her in it better than I have in anything since The Grand Duchess and the Waiter. But the acting honors in The World go to Richard Tucker and William Austin. Tucker, whom I always have seen previously in serious roles, has comedy opportunities in this picture and avails himself of them quite delightfully. Austin's growing popularity as a comedian was shown when the audience of which I was a member began to. laugh as soon as he appeared on the screen and before he had done anything to provoke it. He is alone on the screen as a damn fool Englishman and never fails to make an impression. I never saw Kent before. He has an easy way about him that is pleasing, and is a happy choice to play opposite Miss Vidor. When a picture has as much cleverness in it as there is in this one it makes me wonder why it does not go all the way in that direction and be free from the little faults that detract from it. David Torrence, a fine actor who had almost everything but his presence cut out of the picture, is shown as the head of the legal staff of a railroad. He persuades Miss Vidor to join his staff, thereby establishing the fact that she is a corporation lawyer. Later the whole story turns on the fact that she is consulted on divorce cases, which corporation lawyers never handle. It was not necessary to show Torrence as attorney for a railroad company. The divorce angle could have been planted by having him ask Miss Vidor to join his law firm to handle the divorce cases that came to it. Kent inherits a fortune and promptly quits work, a poor thing for a hero to do. Although he is tremendously rich and his wife's practice has grown to great volume, she asks him to exchange a bracelet he bought her for a set of law books. It is ridiculous and was done only for the convenience of the story, as the bracelet had to crop up later in the possession of Margaret Quimby, who fills a small part quite acceptably. There were plenty of ways of getting the bracelet back to Kent without dragging in the law books, which Miss Vidor was able to buy on her own account. Tucker calls on Florence at her home to consult her about getting a divorce, and although a title strains itself to make the action seem' reasonable it fails of its purpose, for such a thing simply

is not done. Another bit of pure movie stuff is the effort to leave the hero unstained by giving him a title explaining to Tucker's wife that he has called on her in her boudoir merely to tell her that it's all off between them. It would have been better to have shown him as a bit devilish right up to the final clinch, for the story made it reasonable for him to play around more or less. A spoken title has the word "okay" in it. As I pointed out once before in The Spectator, that is the height of silliness. There is no such word. A man might write o. k. that way in a spirit of facetiousness, but how under the sun must he speak it to justify its being spelled that way? But it is a nice little picture. It had many opportunities to be off color, but Reed kept it clean and amusing. We have to thank him for that.

Jannings Is Superb In Too-Drab Picture

HE opening sequences in The Way of All Flesh are done splendidly. They are acted admirably and serve to plant in an entertaining and mildly amusing manner just what the story calls for: that Emil Jannings has a happy home life, that he loves his wife and children and is a kind and indulgent husband and father; that he has a position of trust and is a man of exemplary integrity; that he is fond of clean amusement—in short, that he is a decent, contented American citizen. From these happy scenes there is a gradual transition to a dull note, a note which the picture strikes and holds with monotonous tenacity. The greater part of the production is an individual sorrow done in monotone. It would have been a more entertaining picture if there had been a suggestion of a bright streak, no matter how narrow, running through the drabness. I do not mean that there should have been comedy relief. God forbid! In several scenes a note of relief could have been struck without departing from the spirit of the story. For instance, Jannings, as an old and broken man, is shown peddling hot chestnuts on cold, winter streets. There are hundreds of pedestrians among whom he moves, but he never makes a sale. The mere fact that a man with such a past had to sell chestnuts on the streets contributed all the pathos that was necessary to the scene. To have shown him making a few sales would have relieved the drabness without lessening in any way the scene's inherent appeal. I am of the opinion that Jannings's physical reaction to his sorrows is overdone. I had the feeling as I watched the picture that I could have felt sorrier for him if he had stood up more bravely under the blow that fate had dealt him. His rounded shoulders and his shuffling gait almost got on my nerves. In the final sequence outside his home the expression on his face is that of a man whose mind seems to have lost its power to function. It makes the sequence less compelling. I am not going to waste much sympathy on a man who is himself incapable of being as sorry as I am for his misfortunes. If his mind has failed and he has forgotten his troubles there is no reason why I should worry about him. The whole closing sequence would have been much more appealing if Jannings had been shown in possession of both his mental and physical strength, impaired only to the extent that passing years and his great sorrow could not help affecting him. The picture swings too far in the other direction; it goes the limit in

showing him as a mental and physical wreck. But it is a fine picture. Jannings's performance is superb. What a master of expression he is! Purely as a vehicle for displaying the talents of its star The Way of All Flesh is beyond criticism. Victor Fleming's direction places him among the few really capable directors. In my opinion the bank sequence is one of the best acted and best directed parts of a picture that I ever have seen. Jannings's subtlety and his nuances, his extraordinary ability to talk with his eyes, and the ever-present impression of a sense of humor, make him magnificent in this sequence; and Fleming has handled it with consummate skill. Belle Bennett and that fascinating Phyllis Haver are excellent. Some day Phyllis's name is going to consume an enormous quantity of electrical energy. The Way of All Flesh, however, is practically all Jannings. I hope he remains in this country a long time and that he never makes a worse one. If Paramount can maintain such a pace we have in store for us some rare cinematic treats.

"Out All Night" Somewhat Weak

FARCE can go farther in the extravagance of its assumptions than a straight comedy or a drama can be permitted to, but how far can a farce go? What liberties are allowed it? The humor in a farce is due to the exaggeration of effects and the distortion of incidents. Saintsbury defines the word farce as something that "deals with an actual or possible incident of ordinary life to which comedy complexion is given by its treatment." As I understand farce it must be based on something reasonable, deriving its humor from the unreasonable manner in which the reasonable thing is treated. The premise of a farce, therefore, should be as plausible as the premise of a serious drama. In Out All Night, the latest Bill Seiter-Reg Denny farce soon to be released by Universal, the main premise is faulty, consequently I can see no merit in the whole thing. Marian Nixon is a stage star-a most fascinating one, by the way-and Wheeler Oakman is the manager for whom she appears. She is too busy to sign a renewal of her contract and her uncle signs it for her, which made it as binding on her as it would have been if Peter the Hermit had signed it for her. But the whole farce is built on the assumption that a clause in the contract prevents her marriage for its duration. Oakman's persistence in trying to get Marian to sign it herself, and the absence of any title about a power of attorney held by the uncle, clearly establish the fact that the contract is not a binding one, yet all the action of the farce is a succession of efforts to circumvent it. For that reason Out All Night failed to interest me. It is the least meritorious of all the Denny farces that I have seen. One long scene is built on something as absurd as the contract. Marian starts for her apartment in an automatic elevator. She presses the button with the number corresponding with that of her floor. The elevator starts upward. Denny comes along and presses a button to bring it to the ground floor. Half way up with Marian it stops and starts down again in obedience to Denny's ring. Now automatic elevators do not work that way. The thing is impossible. When one starts upward all the button-pressing on earth will not make it stop until it reaches the floor it starts for. If such were not the case automatic elevators would

be impractical. To be one hundred per cent. funny a scene must be based on a funny idea that is plausible. If machinery be used in a comedy scene it has no value unless it acts like a machine and not like a comedian. The elevator could not have acted as it is made to do in this picture, therefore I could not see anything funny in incidents based on the theory that it could. I do not hold Bill Seiter responsible for the lack of entertainment in Out All Night. His flair for handling farce and light comedy is established as a fact, and when he is given anything clever to work with he can turn out a picture bubbling over with mirth. This time apparently he was handed an impossible script and had to call in some gag men to jazz the thing up. Almost everything we have tired of in two-reel comedies has a place in this feature picture. Only the presence of Marian Nixon in the cast saved the picture as far as I was concerned. She is an engaging youngster. Of course, Denny is all right. He is a really good comedian, but he has little chance in this picture. There should be more downright cleverness in a farce than in any other kind of picture. It is a minus quality in Out All Night, as it generally is in anything that's been out all night.

"Heart of Salome" Is Well Produced

HAT scores of close-ups are not necessary in a picture is demonstrated by Victor Schertzinger in The Heart of Salome. Fox has given the picture a beautiful setting and the director retains all the beauty of the scenes by not continually blotting out the backgrounds with Brobdingnagian reproductions of the features of his leading characters. There is one striking love scene between Alma Rubens and Walter Pidgeon that is shown almost entirely in a very long shot, the features of the players being indistinguishable in the distance, but all the value of the scene being established by the relation of the two to one another. He cuts to a medium shot at the end of the sequence, and does not commit the common crime of showing any part of the love scene in individual close-ups. Every reel of The Heart of Salome is a feast for the eyes. The exterior shots are particularly effective. We are used to interiors that strive to be artistic and sometimes achieve it, but we are not always as fortunate in the exteriors presented to us. The beauty of the outdoor shots in this picture is emphasized by the fine camera work of Glen McWilliams. At times, however, the lighting is more beautiful than reasonable. One scene does not lose its bewitching moonlight attractiveness even when

JOSEPH JACKSON'S

Original Story

"ON TO RENO"

has been selected by JAMES CRUZE for his first picture for P. D. C.

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the moon sets; and before the moon slips beneath the horizon it manages to shed its rays on the sides of the characters farthest from it. No lighting is effective unless its origin be established by shadows as reasonable. A moon can not shine on a man's face and on his back at the same time, and when it sets it does not continue to shine on anything. The elaborate pains which the Fox technical men went to to show the moon setting would have achieved more in the way of realism if a change in the lighting of the scene had supported the moon's action. But on the whole The Heart of Salome is a delightful picture, splendidly directed by Schertzinger, and well acted by Miss Rubens, Walter Pidgeon and Holmes Herbert. It is a melodramatic story that contains nothing particularly new, although it is free from the threadworn conventionalities in its treatment. An example of this was a scene showing Alma receiving a telegram. The telegram is not flashed on the screen. We are pretty sure it is from Herbert, a master crook whose accomplice she is. and we find out that such is the case two scenes later when we see her with Herbert and when she refers to the message. What Herbert wrote in his telegram to call her back to Paris was of no importance; the fact of her return was the only thing that mattered. In a Universal preview which followed this feature picture a clause in a contract is flashed four times, although once would have been enough. The difference between the two pictures was that the one produced by Fox gave the audience credit for having some intelligence, while that from the Universal studio assumed that the memory of the audience could not stretch beyond a few hundred feet of film. The picture that makes the greatest impression is the one that leaves most to the intelligence of the viewer, something that producers do not seem to be able to grasp. Alma Rubens's photographic possibilities are realized fully in The Heart of Salome, but do not outshine her acting

EDWARD CLARK

Dramatist-Scenarist

"DE LUXE ANNE" . Joseph M. Schenck

"PRIVATE IZZY MURPHY". Warner Bros.

"Ladies' Night" Edward Small

"SALLY IN OUR ALLEY" . . . Columbia

AT PRESENT WITH UNIVERSAL

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abilities. Walter Pidgeon is an imposing looking leading man who knows how to act. I like him better every time I see him on the screen.

Forewords and the Close-up Curse

CCASIONALLY we have a picture with a foreword to it. It puts us in the right mental condition to understand and enjoy the opening sequence, as well as to be interested intelligently in the way the theme, explained in the foreword, is developed. It is a sensible practice. That we see it so seldom is due to the fact that our production supervisors have so little picture intelligence. Too many of them think in terms of the stage, and the fact that our vocal plays have no obvious forewords persuades them that pictures should have none. The reason a stage has no explanatory foreword is because all the information that it would convey to the audience is given in the opening scenes. The first ten or twelve minutes of a stage drama are consumed with a lot of talk that virtually amounts to a foreword, for it plants the theme and acquaints the audience with the antecedents of the characters. A picture, denied a voice, can accomplish the same thing, in as far as the theme is concerned, in forty or fifty words. Mata-Hari, that intelligently produced German picture, starts off with a foreword that illuminates its entire course. The Whirlwind of Youth has a brief foreword which I approved when Lread it, but the picture made me forget what it was, for an I could gather from the action is that if a young fellow keeps on kissing girls long enough it is inevitable that sooner or later he will kiss the one and only. Rowland V. Lee directed it. It must have writhed the soul of the man who gave us Barbed Wire to transfer such a purposeless story to the screen. I can not estimate the merits of Lee's direction of this Lois Moran vehicle, for it was hidden behind hundreds of the most absurd close-ups that probably ever were assembled in one picture. The intelligence that Lee displayed in handling Barbed Wire would seem to preclude the possibility that he can be blamed for the lack of intelligence in The Whirlwind. Ordinarily closeups are a director's confession that he shot them because he lacked the ability to handle convincingly in one shot more than one character. Probably Lee close-uped everything for "protection" and Lloyd Sheldon, whom the screen presents as editor, used the close-ups instead of

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HOLLYWOOD

action to tell the story. After watching the parade of close-ups for four or five reels it occurred to me to get some idea of just how many there were in the picture. I counted forty-nine while the minute hand of my watch was traveling from twenty-five after to half-past. That means that there were somewhere around six hundred in the entire picture. I know it is unbelievable, but there are the figures for you. Of the six hundred perhaps six were justifiable. It is one of the most stupid exhibitions of editing that ever made the screen ridiculous. But as our minds are occupied now more with economy in picturemaking than with the modicum of art which they display, reflect upon the great expense that Paramount went to to ruin this particular production. I presume all the scenes were shot also in long and medium shots, as is the idiotic custom of directors. An enormous amount of film, which is time and money in celluloid form, was wasted to give room for the close-ups, which in themselves represented thousands of dollars sacrificed to the downright incompetence of those who made the picture. Lasky contends that the salaries of actors are too high. Yet he pays two of them for the time they spend locked in one another's arms while individual close-ups of them are shot. Lois Moran and Donald Keith are clasped in a tight embrace, but not too tight to prevent the cameraman cleaving them into separate close-ups. And that is but one of the crimes against art and economy which this picture commits. I do not know how long it took to shoot the picture, but I am confident that it would have taken only half the time if the shots that ruined it had been eliminated. While the Biltmore conferences were discussing screen follies I hope they considered the close-up one of the greatest.

ANTHONY COLDEWEY

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"Lost at the Front" Quite a Total Loss

VERLOOKING the full potentialities of the market for a manufactured article by deliberately so making it that it will appeal only to a limited number of its possible purchasers, is in its essentials but one form of extravagance. If we spend one dollar in making an article we can sell only for a dollar and a quarter when without increasing the cost price we could have made it in such a way that we could sell it for a dollar and a half, it would amount to the same thing as selling it for a dollar and a half in the first place and throwing a quarter away. And throwing a quarter away is a violent form of extravagance. No man with any business sense would do such a thing. Yet motion picture producers are doing it constantly. I don't know how much First National spent on Lost at the Front, but it was a considerable sum. For this sum it made a picture that will make extremely young children and extremely undeveloped adults laugh a little, but which by no possibility has any appeal to people with matured minds. For the same amount, with the same cast and perhaps with the same director, it could have made a comedy that would have appealed to both adults and children, for undoubtedly it paid as much for the extremely fatuous attempt at a story as something with some sense in it would have cost. George Sidney is more than a comedian. He has a lively sense of humor and in addition a deep human strain that allows him to put real feeling in such scenes as demand it. It is a matter of no importance that Charlie Murray's comedy makes no appeal to me; it appeals to millions of picture patrons, so there must be merit in it. Sidney and Murray compose a team that could make the whole world laugh if they were provided with a story that had real humor in it. But First National puts them in a vehicle so inept that none but morons could derive any entertainment from it. By giving the story a semblance of coherency scores of millions of discerning people could have enjoyed it, and at the same time those who see virtue in it as it is now would have been pleased even more with it. Even if its producers made the picture with strict regard for economy, which, of course, they didn't, it was a wanton bit of extravagance to so limit its appeal. We have had many comedies to which the same remarks apply: Behind the Front, We're in the Navy Now, Tin Hats and others of the sort. The first two made a great deal of money, which in no way diminishes the force of my contention. I am not interested in how much money such comedies made. My concern is for how much more they would have made

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if they had been richer in comedy that would have made them popular with intelligent people without lessening their popularity with unintelligent people. Perhaps it is because the iniquities of the others has been glossed by the time that has elapsed since I saw them, but as at the moment of writing I am fresh from Lost at the Front I think it is the most hopeless thing I ever saw, considering the kind of thing that it was supposed to be. No doubt the people on the First National lot would be able to explain it. "Oh, well, you see," the explanation would run, "we must make them for the audience. Can't get 'em too highbrow, you know." But the true explanation would be that Lost at the Front is a true expression of First National's comedy sense. Every one connected with the picture did his level best to turn out a comedy that the whole world would applaud, and its lack of cleverness is the gauge by which we may measure the lack of ability in the producing organization. Talk of "making them for the audience" is arrant rot, advanced only as an alibi. It is so with the other so-called comedies which I have mentioned. Under the systems by which the studios turn out their comedies such trash as Lost at the Front and the others are all that we could expect. I do not doubt that its creators think this First National offering is exceedingly funny. They clock childish laughs at a preview and interpret them in terms of adults because such interpretation is most soothing to their ego. When one takes into consideration all the wit and humor that are available in the world, all the brilliant brains that might be enlisted in the cause of comedy, he can but lament afresh the screen's total disregard of them. Instead of brilliant, writers who could supply connected stories brimming over with fun, we have "comedy constructors" whose ideas of humor are as ghastly as the products of coffin constructors.



ALFRED HUSTWICK

FILM EDITOR AND TITLE WRITER

Permanent Telephone WHITNEY 3239

Harking Once More to **Punctuation of Titles**

FFERING the same specious excuse that they do for their still-born comedies, producers claim that ignorant punctuation of titles assists people of little education to read them more readily. At a dinner party the other night I dropped into a seat beside one of our few really educated title-writers. He opened conversation by telling me that he was glad to see that I had abandoned my campaign for the correct punctuation of titles, for it was something that could not be adopted without detriment to the screen. With a logic that I was too content with my dinner to combat he proceeded to explain to me that if I were familiar with the art of title-writing I would know that a strict adherence to the established rules of punctuation would work a hardship on the people in the audience who had little education. For them, he explained, it was necessary to supplant commas with dashes and omit capital letters in order that there would be nothing in the titles to divert their eyes from the words. He illustrated his contention by writing a sample title on the back of a golf score-card. He wrote it this way: "Sally was a bright girl—she was in love with Tom—the town electrician." At his request I aroused energy enough to demonstrate how I would punctuate it: "Sally was a bright girl. She was in love with Tom, the town electrician." He smiled indulgently. Then he argued that by separating the words by dashes the moron could catch their meaning at a glance, whereas by my system it would take him longer to understand them. As I had eaten myself into a state of stuffed ecstasy, which was enhanced by the hostess's permission for me to light my pipe, I was in no condition to argue the matter and allowed my title-writing friend to retire from the field victorious. But let us see. No matter how a title be punctuated, a moron, to be able to read it, must be able to read. How did he learn how to read—from a text book, or from screen titles? From a text book, of course. The vast majority of people who attend picture houses do at least a little reading of newspapers, magazines, or books that please their fancies. A safe majority of them do still more reading. Everywhere else except on the screen they would find the words quoted above punctuated as I punctuate them. Nowhere except on the screen would they find them punctuated as the title-writer punctuates them. The eye of the moron, therefore, is trained more to catch the meaning at a glance when the title is punctuated properly than when it is punctuated improperly. The educated person would not be handicapped by the incorrect punctuation, for he could catch the meaning by a glance at the words, but the moron, finding the words not set forth as he has been used to seeing them every other place, would be confused by the departure from the usual, and he would have to study the title to get its meaning. The guides that assist him in all other reading would be missing. The truth, of course, is that the title-writer, with whom I refused to argue on a full stomach, does not know how to punctuate, and, like the producers who do not know how to make comedies, has to fall back on the old one about getting down to the level of the audience. It is not to his discredit. He can write good titles, and no doubt his *secretary could punctuate them properly if he would allow her to. One of the chief duties of my secretary is to fill

OTHER PEOPLE'S OPINIONS

N THE last issue of The Spectator we made a broad statement that, "scarcely one connected with the moving picture industry to-day is not paying approximately twice as much as is necessary for the same insurance as they have, in the same companies as they are insured in. It is doubtful if there is one who could not get back anywhere from twenty-five per cent. to fifty per cent. of what they have been overcharged by the companies."

Lest it might appear that this was either an unfounded or a biased opinion, I quote herewith as a preface to my further demonstration of the truth of these facts, from three publications, namely: "The World's Work", "Babson's Report" and "The Dearborn Independent."

EXCERPTS FROM "THE WORLD'S WORK"

"The insurance companies have led the public into bad bargains by skilfully preparing policies which in-clude all manner of benefits, bonuses, investments and other 'prizes' tacked on. None of these 'prize' schemes have any inherent connection with life insurance. Some are speculative investments and other blind gambles; and some are gambles and speculative investments in

one."
"The evil of frill policies originates with the companies; for these policies were the basis of the irresponsible millions the companies have worked so hard to heap up. In their struggle to sell these things, the whole business of selling life insurance has been de-

EXCERPT FROM BABSON'S REPORT

"I believe in life insurance. Insurance, like every other good thing, however, may be abused. Those who have insurance to sell sometimes get over-enthusiastic and promise things which can not be delivered. This is especially true when some life insurance agent attempts to sell life insurance as 'the best investment.'

EXCERPTS FROM "THE DEARBORN INDEPENDENT"

"Perhaps after a little inspection of the insurance business from the inside, as it were, we shall see some of the ways in which the public is being forced to pay enormously more for insurance than is warranted by the current cost, and in many cases maneuvered out of just rights after a policy has been taken out.'

"It would seem almost as if life insurance is purposely made so complicated that the average buyer shall be unable to grasp the real significance of the jumbled policies that are offered for his acceptance."

What would you say if your tailor told you he had a dozen prices for the same suit, according to the engraving on invoices or bills?

Yet this is exactly the proposition the insurance companies make.

The above excerpts will corroborate my original statement, and the last reference is an accurate example of the so-called varied kinds of policies to be explained later.

AND THAT IS NOT ALL.

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in the holes she finds in the morning in the stuff I have written the night before. Each hole represents a word I can not spell even well enough to find it in the dictionary which is in constant use beside me while I write. The people for whom titles should be punctuated correctly do not need to understand punctuation. The printed language should be presented to them on the screen as it is presented to them everywhere else, just as I take pains to see that every word in The Spectator is spelled as you find it spelled everywhere else. My quarrel with screen punctuation is not one with those who write the titles. It is with the producers who do not regard education sufficiently highly to secure the services of at least one person in every organization who can reflect it on the screen. The kind of punctuation that we see most often now offends those who know how to punctuate and confuses those who know only how to read.

Just Why Do Directors Do Such Silly Things?

OIS MORAN, in The Whirlwind of Youth, a Paramount whirlwind of close-ups, stands in a moonlit garden. Gareth Hughes walks up to her, making no apparent effort to deaden his footsteps. He pauses for a moment behind her, and she is startled greatly when she discovers his presence. Apparently if it had not been for the noise the moon made shining on the garden she would have heard him, for a moonlit garden late at night is otherwise a rather quiet place. Later in the same picture Donald Keith is alone in a large room fiddling with his puttees. Lois and quite an acceptable young actor who I think is the fellow who used to play with Alberta Vaughan in terrible two-reelers, enter the room and close the door behind them. They do not sneak in, but Keith is surprised greatly when he discovers they are near him. Will some director be so kind as to inform me why scenes are shot that way? I know one reason is that someone started doing it twenty years ago, but is it possible that there is no other reason? Anyone with any sense would know that there would be drama in Lois watching Hughes approach her across the lonely garden, and none in the utterly absurd assumption that she did not hear his footsteps, or in any way feel his presence until he spoke. The room in which Keith is alone opens off a barroom in which several officers are playing cards and drinking. The moment the door opens Keith must hear the voices from the other room, even if he did not hear the lifting of the iron latch on the door, a totally absurd assumption, for Lois and her escort make no effort to deaden the sound.

Writing for United Artists

JACK JEVNE

"Tempest" John Barrymore
"Breakfast" . . Constance Talmadge
"McFadden's Flats" . First National
"Ladies at Play" . First National
"Clinging Vine" . . Leatrice Joy
"Eve's Leaves" . . . Leatrice Joy

Writers' Club — HOllywood 7145

But Keith hears nothing until the proper movie moment. What is gained by such childish directorial methods? You see the same thing in hundreds of pictures, and an equally ridiculous variation of it when a knock on a door greatly startles the occupant of a room. Is there supposed to be drama in keeping Keith unaware of the approach of the other two, in face of the fact that the audience knows that he could not help hearing them? Does the scene lose anything if he should look up the moment the door opens? In both instances these scenes are but little things in the picture, but it is the multiplicity of such absurdities that ruins so many pictures. They are the gauge that measures the degree of mentality that entered into the making of the production. I do not know if Griffith invented the startle when he invented the close-up, but whoever is responsible for it has a lot to account for. The screen has been brought to such a pass by incompetent direction that we rate as great pictures those whose stories are told merely as anyone with common sense would tell them. For this specific incompetence we have as a palliative the irritating influence of general studio incompetency which would seem to be enough to drive directors crazy, but even in moments of madness they should retain enough sanity to detect insanity in their methods. When directors are made to shoot from perfect scripts, and to stick to such scripts when shooting, all the silly little things that mar pictures now will be follies of the past, for they are creations of the method of making pictures and not of literary minds which conceive the stories. However, while we are going through the long process of evolving perfect scripts, we might improve the status of the screen art by the simple expedient of regarding each scene as it is shot as



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The screen could do with a few more character women as genuinely funny as Marie Dressler and Polly Moran. As long as these two hold the center of the stage The Callahans and the Murphys is an amusing comedy. There is no other woman that I know of who can put over so much comedy by facial expression as Marie Dressler. Truly she is a scream. When sanity comes to production and really clever writers are allowed to put wit on the screen, Miss Dressler easily could become one of the best box-office bets in the business. Such a vehicle as the present one will not advance her prestige a great deal. It is richer in promise than in performance. But screen promises seldom are realized. If M.-G.-M. can not scare up a better story than The Callahans for Miss Dressler's return to the screen it is unlikely that it, or any other similarly conducted studio, will do better the second time. When the picture departs from the really amusing low comedy of Miss Dressler and Miss Moran and takes itself seriously it becomes very blah indeed. All the story there is in it endeavors to create the impression in the minds of viewers who can not recognize obvious movie tricks, that the daughter of one of the families has had an illegitimate child. It is a beautiful thought and presents accurately the studio's conception of a good story. That is what the supervisor system has done for Metro. I have no objection whatever to immorality on the screen, for it is by contemplating immorality that we value morality, but as it is presented to us in this picture it merely is cheap and vulgar. To the intelligent mind it is obvious all the time that the audience is going to discover that, after all, the girl is married, making the whole thing merely a silly attempt to be something that it isn't.

Road-shows are born, not made. I am repeating something which I said in The Spectator one year ago. To give a director one million dollars and a script and tell him to make a road-show is one of the craziest things the industry does. To announce an "epic" in advance is

DUDLEY MURPHY

ORIGINAL STORIES IN CONTINUITY

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equally crazy. The public makes road-shows, not the producers. Witness Old Ironsides and Seventh Heaven. The latter started off as a comparatively little picture and became a great one. The former started off as something great and became a very poor thing. At their inception all pictures should be of equal importance. The best possible scripts should be prepared, thus giving directors an even break to start with. The best of the ensuing product then can head the producer's releases. Baldly announcing that a certain picture is going to be a road-show merely because it is going to cost a stupendous sum is ridiculous.

Perhaps the most extraordinary thing Terry Duffy and his players are demonstrating at El Capitan is that it still is possible to see a good show for one dollar and a quarter. Don't let the price keep you away. Many times you have paid two or three times as much to see a performance not half so good. Laff That Off is more than just a comedy. It is a story of the beautiful love that exists between three men, an appealing theme for play or picture. Terry has brought to Hollywood a splendidly balanced company, and if he keeps up the pace at which he started off he and Dale might as well buy a bungalow and send for the rest of the stuff.

They say that Tom Mix is considering a proposition to go with a circus. That would account for the manner of his arrival at the Banky-La Rocque wedding. Apparently it was his first dress rehearsal.

PAUL SCHOFIELD

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"RIGHT SIDE UP"

"PIRATE OF NEW ORLEANS"

"LEGALLY DEAD"

"THE JERSEY LILLIE"

"HOLD EVER'THIN"

"THE DREAM HOUND"

"UNDERWORLD"

ALMOST ANYONE CAN READ

By MADELEINE MATZEN

HOUSANDS - and once in a while a million or two—are spent each year on certain super-productions and de luxe feature pictures -and now they are retrenching. There is much talk of making cuts in salaries-the producers are scrambling around-trying to cut down expenses. The retrenching idea applies especially to the high priced scenario writers.

Of course, we believe that the cost of production in the big studios is absurd and wasteful. Production needs to be cut down. But how about the salaries of the well known scenario writers? How about slicing them and giving a part of the slice to new and untried authors?

Why are people like Frances Marion paid small fortunes for a continuity of some timeworn story? We are not envious, for Miss Marion is a skilful continuity writer, though it is quite some time since anything approaching a sparkling new idea has made its appearance in her continuities.

Old Stuff Rewritten

Between the Frances Marions of the industry and the hack scenario writer come swarms of men and women receiving large salaries for adaptations and continuities. And these adaptations and continuities are merely the old, old situations rewritten in the same manner in which they have always been rewritten. These writers are receiving large salaries for what they have done in the past-not for the work done to-day.

The producers realize this, yet they claim that they are powerless to help matters. They can't find new writers; there is safety in the well known

The bigger the producer the more apt he is to take the line of least resistance. He falls back on big names, and then he hollers because he looses money. And the long-suffering public continue to be coaxed, with very gilded publicity, into the picture houses to see what? Trite and banal pictures.

Mr. Laemmle and Mr. de Mille are always crying for new ideas—but I wonder just how much of a chance a story written by a brand new and heretofore unheard of author would have in their studios.

Readers at Fault

This situation is not the fault of Mr. de Mille or of Mr. Laemmle. I believe that they are quite sincere in their efforts to find worth-while stories. The fault lies with the underlings, with the readers in the various studios, for a curious form of snobbishness exists in the reading departments. A process of judging stories by their EXTERIOR appearance and of judging the author in the same

For example: I was talking to one of the most successful scenario writers the other day. I asked him why he

was so successful, for as it happened his screen plays had never interested me particularly. With immense pride he showed me a copy of his latest effort. It was a thick affair, beautifully typed and exquisitely bound. With something like pity he showed me an effort that had just come in—a story running for about thirty pages, unbound, and with no attempt at exterior decoration.

"Not a bad story!" he told me, picking up the new arrival, "but we can't use it!" and he turned with pride once more to his own beautifully bound story. Seeing a twinkle in my eyes he went on, hastily, "Of course I give them so much MORE material in my stories. The trouble is that the new author never sends in enough material."

The Size Counted

All of which reminds me of the story about the newly rich woman who bought her paintings by the yard. The bigger the canvas the more she was willing to pay.

Not long ago an author brought her story to a producer. The story might have made a screen play for the star in question, but unfortunately it never reached the producer.

The reader into whose hands it was entrusted explained: "The title page was so dirty and the script was so dog earend, I just hated to give it to Mr. So-and-So (mentioning the producer). He is such a fastidious ducer). man!"

Now that particular producer was frantically searching for a story for his star. He also loves to tinker with his automobile, which as every one knows is not a clean habit. Also I saw the manuscript that had been condemned as too "dirty". It had a smudge or two on the title page, the edges were a bit worn, but it was in good condition; it was legible and it was an intensely dramatic story. The very same manuscript was sold just the other day, sold directly to a pro-

Clothes Unmade the Author

At another studio a reader holds a position because she is distantly related to a producer. She boasted that she had returned a story because the woman who presented it was dowdyher clothes were "dreadful"; she was certain that she couldn't write. Incidentally the author in question was well known, but it happened that the reader had not come across her

I want to know whether producers are buying beautifully typed manuscript written by smartly dressed people, or whether they are buying stories that would make dramatic screen plays? It's a great puzzle to me!

In almost every reading department very comfortable positions are being held down by people related (often very distantly) to the producer or to the stars. These people rather lord it over the others, for they are there to stay. But I want to know if being related to a producer or a star makes one a judge of dramatic stories.

I have always heard that a sense of drama was something born in one

and could not be cultivated.

It seems to me that it would be a worth while plan and a great help to the writers under contract if a few new ideas did filter across their desks. Technic is a hard-earned thing and most essential to the photo-dramatist, but of what earthly use is technic when there are no new ideas to apply

New Ideas Wanted

If I were a producer I would welcome a new idea with open arms and a ready checkbook. I'd employ readers who knew a new idea when they saw one, that is, readers with background. I'd make every reader prove that he knew a dramatic theme and situation when he saw it. I'd give my annoying relatives a pension. I'd make them live AWAY from Hollywood, for I would fight to keep them away from the gate that lets thoughts, visions, dreams and drama into my scenario department. Keeping a business in the family may be a policy, but it's like preserving a dynasty—in the end it becomes effete. In the main that is what is happening to the motion picture industryit has become effete.

The screen plays of earlier days had far more stamina, more imagination, more vitality, than those of the last few years. And one can not blame this entirely upon the censors. The industry needs NEW BLOOD, and it needs it most of all in the scenario

departments.

The new writer should have his chance. It seems futile, stupid and unfair to close the door in his face. It seems stupid to yell continually of "story policy", to employ only those who are familiar with the policy. What is "story policy" anyway? The main thing is to please the public, and all the public wants, and will pay for, is to be amused.

The Story's the Thing

The old ideas have lost their value as entertainment value. Why not give the public something new, something different? Why waste millions to make a dull Ben Hur when "Poverty Row" is waxing prosperous with its theory of "the story's the thing"?

The producers are not entirely to blame. But they have placed their trust in mediocre minds. They listen too much to politics talked by those who are lacking in vision. Politics rules and so do the many relatives. Some day a new producer will arise, unheralded and give the public fresh dreams, new ideas, beauty and drama. And the old ones will rub their heads and wonder how it all happened. If one company makes a box office success, the others rush to make similar pictures, hoping to grab a little of the success for themselves. And yet there are always new stories to be had with a little careful searching.

For every Big Parade and What Price Glory there are a thousand stupid pictures. Yet Lawrence Stallings was once unknown.

Old Writers in a Rut

The old writers are writing in circles; their stories never get anywhere. Yet there is the whole great world to explore. The new writer is apt to be an explorer. He is not fighting to hold his own; he has time for enthusiasm.

This does not necessarily mean that the high schools and colleges should be combed for talent. To be sure one learns to read in school and at college, but the universities graduate thousands a year who have no ability at all as dramatists. Having an A. B. or an M. A. or a P. H. D. tied to your name does not guarantee that you

have any value at all as a photo-dramatist.

Then, too, genius often flowers late in life, and we need a few geniuses in the scenario departments.

Sincerity and background have value in any reading department, as do judgment and experience. I would exchange fifty literary lights fresh from college for one embryo Jim Tully or Knut Hamsun.

And I believe that the job of reader should be as highly paid as that of continuity writer. If the story be big enough and beautiful enough and dramatic enough, almost any skilful person can break it up into continuity.

Why pay large sums for the doctoring and patching up of a weak yarn, when there are strong vital ones to be bought?

Find the story. The rest is comparatively simple.

And to find a story one must have readers. Anyone can read, but how many have judgment and knowledge?

heart beat and its variations under abnormal conditions. The experiment has been utilized for teaching purposes.

In a recent decree by the president of Cuba, a censorship of motion pictures has been provided, according to information received by the Children's Bureau, Department of Labor.

Under the Ministry of the Interior, a committee, consisting of six members, will examine all films with authority to bar those they consider objectionable to public morals, or offensive to the national honor, or that of a friendly nation.

Under a new ruling Cuban children, under fourteen years of age, may not be admitted to motion picture performances after 8:30 p. m., except on Sundays and holidays. Violations of the new law will provoke heavy fines, proceeds of which will be used for the purchase of educational films for the public schools.

As a result of Mexico's sensitive state, where her national pride is concerned, five of our completed pictures are on the shelf, and will not be released. It seems that there has been a law passed recently, to bar any films from being screened on Mexican territory where any of the characters are cast as Mexican villains. And that is not all. Even if the picture, depicting such villain of said nationality, is shown far from the Mexican borders but is called to the attention of

What You Should Know About the Law

Compiled by Roger Marchetti, of the Los Angeles Bar

It is difficult to define in legal terms just what constitutes an indecent performance. In the case of People vs. Barney Kelly (manager of National Winter Garden stock) et al., the cast was placed under arrest during the performance. At the trial of the case, Policeman Ford told of alleged indecent dialogue, and was corroborated by other officers. However, the evidence being too weak to support the charge, it was not necessary for defendants to testify. The charge was dismissed on motion of the attorney for the defence.

In a suit brought against Channing Pollock, well known author and playwright, Abraham Waxman charged Mr. Pollock with lifting from his play Soldiers of the Common Good his idea for The Fool. It was brought out, however, that he had never seen the manuscript of the Waxman play, and witnesses testified that he was considering the plot for The Fool in 1900 and that he wrote it from 1902 to 1908.

This case has been brought to a close recently in the New York courts, clearing Mr. Pollock of the charge.

* *

Among recent arbitration cases in New York, with two decisions in favor of the exhibitor, were claims against Famous Players. The Rialto at Westfield, N. Y., was awarded \$236.50 from the Paramount New Jersey exchange because it did not receive the full amount of pictures contracted for. The theatre asked for \$500 damages.

The other victor against Famous Players was Lafferts, at Richmond Hill, L. I. Damages of \$700 were claimed on the ground that the house claimed seven days' protection on For Heaven's Sake, and received reimbursement for a large amount paid

for the picture. An award of \$150 was made.

Five years ago the Committee on Scientific Exhibit, recognizing the validity of criticisms against surgical film demonstrations in general medical ordinances, ruled that no films dealing with surgical technique could be shown in the motion picture theatres, although illustrated lectures on surgical topics were encouraged. "The motion picture film will, of course, always be of value for recording interesting or unusual conditions, such as nervous afflictions and motor defects . ." it was declared by the committee, but the ruling remained the same "because the observer obtains an erroneous impression of the relative ease in performing unusual and difficult surgical operations."

A new note was sounded, however, when it was recently announced that a study of the physiognomy and physical attitudes in the different forms of mental diseases is soon to be undertaken. At Columbia University moving pictures demonstrated the actual movements of a heart with the organs exposed in a dog under an anesthetic. Under the influence of various drugs it was possible to permanently record and visually demonstrate the normal

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a Mexican ambassador who will promptly report it, every ensuing picture produced by the same director, will be barred from showing in Mexico. This ruling will hold good no matter what company the director may subsequently become affiliated with.

The attitude of foreign countries on American-made films is intricate and results in considerable worry for the producers. One of the most serious cases resulted when the table of

a German spy was shown decorated with a photograph of Hindenburg. The producer had evidently forgotten that Hindenburg is now president of the German Republic and that his photograph in the hangout of a despicable personage like a spy would aggravate the German government grievously.

All films made by the producer of that picture suffered for a considerable period following the showing of

the film.

VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

ABOUT COSTUMES

Dear Mr. Beaton:

As manager and designer of the wardrobe for five years for Famous-Players-Lasky and for over a year in the same capacity for M.-G.-M. I think myself qualified to say a word concerning the efficiency demanded of the department.

The original plan of costuming a production was the working out of each scene with the director, scenarist, actor or actress. Later methods introduced the general supervisor and the efficiency man, all in consultation many times before the principals in the story were interviewed.

The method in vogue at M.-G.-M. was efficient in that a finished script was delivered to all departments, and the costumes planned, made and tested before the actual day of production started. This I found to be most satisfactory, and, if such methods were pursued in all studios, wardrobe problems would be nil.

One of the remarks I shall never forget in talking over difficult situations, such as working department heads twenty hours a day, is, "We grant you the adjustments you desire could be made, but the profits at the end of the year are gratifying, so why bether"?

why bother"?

The average director admits that he can not tell what a gown looks like until he sees it on the wearer, but the efficiency man blusters that he knows all about it; then comes the production manager, the assistants, property boys, set dressers, camera men and at last the actor or actress, and finally the wardrobe designers.

In executing a director's idea of a correctly gowned woman, the mode of the moment is not considered, every man having his idea of sex appeal and demanding its expression, likewise his own idea of a gentlewoman, etc. Every designer would appreciate being made to feel that his or her talent and studied taste counted for something. Erte had much to give the public, had his creations been recognized for their true value and had he not been manhandled by gross inefficiency.

Though we create here and no doubt set the world of fashion for the screen, it is most important that all designers be allowed to travel and communicate with the world at large. We can gather a valuable bit from every country in the world.

Constructive co-operation will lead to better results, and this many-hands-in-the-pot condition may partly have been brought about in training people for studio jobs. I was the first to bring about the two, and then the three, eight-hour shifts a day, now adopted in the studios, relieving the women of the long hours imposed on them.

ETHEL CHAFFIN.

To the Editor:

Why do you class The Yankee Clipper as one of the year's ten worst? I remember your review quite well. I read it before I saw the picture, and then I went twice to see the picture just because I had read your panning, and was more convinced the second time than the first, both by my own reactions and by those evident in each audience, that for once you were all wet. I'll admit that a forty-eight star flag of the early 1800's jarred the illusion, but on the whole there was for me, and apparently for the two audiences I studied, a real illusion there. Both myself and the audiences each time got a real kick out of the finish of that race which you criticized so vehemently. Are you wrong, or am I?

FRANK ROBERTS.

Tacoma, Wash.

(The two facts, that this corespondent liked The Yankee Clipper and that I disliked it, can not be reconciled. I am glad he liked it. I envy a person who can find enjoyment where I can not. To me there was no suspense in the frigate race; to him there was. Neither of us is wrong, for to each of us there was in that

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race just what each of us saw in it. The fact that the correspondent saw suspense in it can not be argued away, simply because it is a fact. A feeling is as much a fact as a ton of bricks, and you can't argue a ton of bricks out of existence. But I'll offer this in my own defense: I regard a picture as poor in the degree that it fails to realize its possibilities; a viewer, such as my correspondent, measures the entertainment value of only such possibilities as are realized. I think The Yankee Clipper is a very poor picture because, with the same material, it might have been a very good one; my correspondent thinks it a good picture because he did not concern himself with how much better it might have been.)

MATTER OF CREDIT

Dear Sir:

I heard an argument the other day between a scenario writer and a director in regard to the matter of credit. The writer was bitterly protesting against the practice of having several writers do adaptations on certain stories, all of which would be finally handed to one favored or lucky writer, who alone would be given credit.

The director somewhat sardonically maintained that this was an excellent system, and he instanced Metro-Goldwyn as an example of how the thing worked. A novel or play is bought. A dozen writers (unknown to each other perhaps) may be assigned to do an adaptation. The last writer—or rather the one picked out to do the final script—has the advantage of all the ideas contained in the several scripts and of course he gets the credit.

The director also said, with a wry grin, "The other fellows get their salaries anyway." But salaries are not enough. They are entitled to credit for their work. It is a notorious fact that many writers and also

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editors, who may not have even touched certain scripts, have their names blazoned upon the screen as being the adapter, scenarist or with having supervised or written the continuity.

Say a word or two for the poor dubs whose ideas have been thus tricked out of them; who have enthusiastically gone to work upon an adaptation with the deluded notion that they will be given credit for their work, only to find the other fellow's name substituted for theirs upon the screen. Occasionally a paragraph of publicity to the effect that John Dub is doing "Blooming Smiles" is allowed him; but that's as far as it goes. In most cases he simply is ignored on the screen.

There is more heart burning, more blighted hopes and heart aches in a scenario department because of this matter of credit than anything else. One fellow does the work. Another sails in and takes the credit.

The Screen Writers Guild is now preparing a standard contract for writers. This thing of credit certainly should be covered in such contract.

JOHN BUSH.

WHY AN AGE LIMIT?

Dear Mr. Beaton:

I am informed that certain of the motion picture companies have decided to engage only young writers to do their scenarios, adaptations and continuities. The Fox Films was especially mentioned, and it is a well-known fact that the producers are signing up young and new writers.

We have had a surfeit of "boy wonders" in executive positions and positions of authority. The youngsters holding the responsible posts of supervisors are jokes on most of the lots. Now we are to have young writers. Talent has no age. One needs to know life and to have lived it to write of it. There would be just as much sense in the Metropolitan Opera Company throwing out its singers when they had reached maturity and substituting for them flappers and flippers.

The finest of our pictures have not been done by kids, but by men and women who not only know life, but happen to have the God-given talent to write about it.

J. ARMSTRONG.
(A bit over 40)

A NURSE PROTESTS

Mr. Welford Beaton:

Why, oh why, when a picture corporation decides to turn out pictures containing hospital scenes with nurses, doctors, surgeons, etc., do they not try to get as near the real thing as possible?

I visited a theatre this past week to see the picture, Moulders of Men, with Conway Tearle. He tried to be a physician. Maybe he did study the ethics of the profession for about twenty minutes.

In one scene, after the operation, the famous surgeon, with his assistants, gathered in the superintendent's office, in which was the superintendent of nurses. She remained seated while they were there. Ye gods! where did she get her training? Please advise the picture people that any registry will furnish them an honest-to-goodness nurse for a superintendent for less than they pay stars to act the part. I felt like calling: "Oh, please stand up until the doctor tells you to sit down."

But what avail to write, talk or print? Movie directors go on the theory that the audience, or the major portion of it, have the intelligence of children. So one day I expect to see a star taking a probation nurse's part, sitting in the superintendent's office, and the movie directors will think it correct.

M. T. M.

INTIMATE CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Welford:

Yesterday I received a statement from The Film Spectator, informing me that my subscription had expired and that \$3.50 was due your paper—that is, if I want to renew for another year.

You bet I want to renew it, not only for one year, but for nine more besides that.

Therefore find enclosed check for \$35.00—ten years at \$3.50 per year. Do I need to tell you further how much I enjoy your paper, the only publication I really read from cover to cover? Success and best regards,

JEAN HERSHOLT.

Dear Jean:

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Dear Welford:

You got me wrong. I am not generous. I'm a tightwad. Some day you're going to get sensible and boost your subscription rate, and I wanted to get in before you do.

GOOD FOR COMEDY

I always have been interested in Lya de Putti when I have seen her on the screen. I have enjoyed her vivacity and bubbling gaiety when I have seen her at social gatherings. I have chatted with her sufficiently to become acquainted with her intelligence and sense of humor. I have not mentioned it to her, but I am satisfied that she could be developed into a comedienne who would become immensely popular. She has a sparkling personality that she has no opportunity to register in the parts assigned to her.

SOMETHING NEW

In one of Don Ryan's titles in When a Man Loves someone calls someone else a "rascalion". It has all the earmarks of a dirty crack, but I can't find any dictionary that has heard of it.

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Edited by WELFORD BÉATON

FILM SPECTATOR

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No. 13

Box-Office Ratings of Writers, Supervisors, Directors and Players

Inside Story of Salary Cut Fiasco

How Producers Used the Academy as a Tool

- 0 ----

A MAN'S PAST

DEVIL'S SADDLE

THREE'S A CROWD

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AL COHN

the other day. He tells me he is working on two stories, The Cohens and Kellys in Paris and The Last Warning.

I, too, am a remarkable fellow.

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SCENARIST

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HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, AUGUST 20, 1927

Academy Becomes Tool of Producers

TELL, what of it? The curtain has rung down on the sublime salary cut farce which made ridiculous everyone connected with it except the people who staged it, the producers; and we are back just where we started. Ignorance and extravagance are still in the saddle; pictures will continue to be bad, and waste will lose none of its gorgeous bloom. All along the line the producers have scored a great victory. I am dazzled by the brilliance of it. They started on a fool adventure that gave promise of bringing down ridicule upon them, but by an astute movement they outwitted all other branches of the industry and emerged as the only ones to whom no blame attaches for the follies that were theirs until they switched them to the shoulders of their employees. Nothing quite so clever, or quite so funny, has happened for a long time. The employment of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as the catspaw to pull the producers' chestnuts from the fire was a stroke of absolute genius. When the Academy was organized the greatest obstacle it had to overcome was the feeling throughout the industry that it was a gesture of the producers to serve their own ends. The Spectator joined others who were equally sincere in protesting against this construction being put upon the unselfish efforts of those whose only purpose was to build up an organization that would be representative of the entire industry, and in which the producer representation would be but a fifth part. I felt that it was preposterous to challenge the good faith of such splendid picture people as Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Fred Niblo, Conrad Nagel and others equally noted for their high ideals and personal integrity. But when the first emergency in the industry occurs, what do we find? The Academy becomes the tool of the producers. My genuine respect for those whom I have mentioned is lessened none by that fact; rather I admire them the more for being so rich in fine qualities as to be unsuspicious of others. Nor is my con-

fidence in the ultimate usefulness of the Academy disturbed by the fact of its first mistake. When it awakens to what the producers have done to it, it will be able better to take care of itself in the future. It is young yet, a condition it will outgrow, and we do not blame young things for being gullible. For Academy purposes the industry has been divided into five branches: writers, actors, directors, technicians, and producers. The whole virtue of its plan of organization is that it makes all branches equal, and that it functions as a whole as a representative of the entire personnel of the industry. But when put to its first test it functions entirely for the producers. Beyond being allowed to defray the heavy cost of the Biltmore conference and the incidental eating, the Academy, as far as I could observe from a spectator's seat, had nothing whatever to do with what went on in its name. One branch, the producers, called the other four branches on the carpet, lectured them, received their confessions, absolved them, and sent them back to their seats. The producers were the only ones who confessed to no sins. Why did the Academy not function as a whole? What right had the producers, in the name of the Academy, to conduct the conferences? If one branch had to take the lead, why the prodigious folly of making that branch the one that would fan to fresh heat the only misgivings with which the Academy has had to contend? Of course, I know the answers to all these questions. The Academy thought it was functioning. It was-just like the cat functioned at the fire that made the chestnuts hot. The only difference was that the Academy was permitted to pay for the chestnuts and to meet all the other expenses.

Producers Only Ones Without Sin

THE Academy as a whole had nothing to do with the calling off of the cut in salaries. Directors, writers, actors, and technicians, as organized bodies, had nothing to do with it. The conferences had nothing to do with it. It was called off two days after it was an-

ATMOSPHERE

Now and then there comes the fragrance
Of a soft exotic air
Wafting from some fair Utopia,
Out beyond the border, where
Reigns Romance; its magic aura
Toning life with roseate hue:
Joy to-day, delight to-morrow
As hope revives and dreams come true.

Now and then our eyes are gladdened
By some soul-uplifting view,
Aureate, splendent and suggestive
Of a realm more deeply true
To the spark divine within us,
Cradled in the lowly sod,
Climbing, with assistance tenuous,
Upward to the hand of God.

Pictures, too, can conjure visions,
Ravish hearts with sheer delight,
Weave the tapestries of morning,
Whisper, low, of love,—and night—
Sound the trumpets, stir to action
Cohorts of a thousand men—
Jove! great thunderbolt of vengeance!
... When?

-GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN.

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ALFRED HUSTWICK

is in the hospital, enjoying an operation, or something, and tells me to hold everything until he gets out.

ANTHONY COLDEWEY

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nounced, and everything that happened thereafter was but a gesture by the producers to save their faces. When they started to get from under I doubt if they had any idea that they would emerge so brilliantly. The first blow struck at the threat to reduce salaries was such a heavy one, and was so well placed, that I am sure the producers thought that they were pretty much up against it. But they weren't stumped. The Academy was at hand to be used as a tool, and they used it, placed themselves in the right and all others in the wrong, and have a document that they can show to Wall Street to prove that the directors, writers, actors, and technicians have confessed to being responsible for the extravagance that has entered into picture making; that proves that after weeks of investigation by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, representative of the entire personnel of the industry, the only sin that was found for the producers to confess to was their failure to establish a central research bureau. I congratulate the producers on the magnitude of their victory. I am sincere in this, for I always can admire a resourceful fighter. Before I relate just how the cut in salaries was averted perhaps I had better explain how I arrive at my conclusion that the four branches of the Academy confessed to being responsible for the grotesque system of making pictures that rules in all the studios. All promises to reform are confessions of sins *committed. If I agree to refrain from beating my wife, the agreement is tantamount to an acknowledgment that in the past I have beaten her. If it were not so, my promise to refrain would be a senseless thing. The actors in the Academy solemnly promised that hereafter they would not indulge in temperament. That is their confession that in the past they have made of themselves temperamental asses—either that, or it is their admission that they are crazy. The spectacle of them prostituting the dignity of a great dramatic art, that of acting before the camera, by grovelling on their bellies before the producers and promising to behave like normal human beings, is a sickening one. And the same thing goes for the directors, writers, and technicians. Everyone of them knows that the rank incompetence of the producers is responsible for the wanton squandering of the industry's money, but not one of them was man enough to stand up and prefer such a charge. If the producers did not have the Academy and all its members as individuals squarely under their thumbs why was no mention made of the eight-hour day, something that four-fifths of the Academy is for wholeheartedly? While the confessions were in order, did Louis B. Mayer confess to bringing Ivan Turjanski to this country and paying him a salary for twelve months before giving him one opportunity to earn any of it? While he was insulting the members of the Academy by serving notice on them that they would be expected to keep their promises, did Cecil de Mille confess to paying Jetta Goudal sixty thousand dollars in salary while she was waiting for him to find a story for her? After the writers confessed that they have been turning out slovenly scripts, did Jesse Lasky confess that the department he heads, in an effort to make a picture out of Looie the Fourteenth, shot thirteen reels of such rotten stuff that the whole thing is being done over again? After the directors confessed that they have made production expensive by interfering arbitrarily with stories, did Joseph M. Schenck rise and acknowledge that he brought to this country Vladimir

Dantchenko, founder of the Moscow Art Theatre, and for a year has been paying him a salary without knowing what to do with him? No, to all questions. It was the producers' circus, and no one ever makes the owners of a circus jump through the hoops.

Why They Called Off the Salary Cut

THEN Conrad Nagel telephoned Louis B. Mayer at eleven o'clock on the night after the salary cut was announced, the cut suggestion received a shock from which it passed away next day, although its death was not announced officially until the conclusion of the long wake held at the Biltmore. Nagel spoke as the representative of a small group of picture people who met at the Hollywood Athletic Club to discuss the plan of the producers. He told Mayer that those he represented were quite willing to accept the cut in salaries provided they were allowed to satisfy themselves that the financial conditions of the companies were such as to make the cut an economic necessity. Mayer wanted to come in from Santa Monica to appear before the meeting, but that would not suit the little group at the club, and it scattered before anyone could arrive and discover what a little group it was. Next day the producers were given an ultimatum in line with the message of the preceding night: "Open your books, or call off the cut; and if you won't do either, all the newspapers in the country will be informed that such is our stand." From that moment the salary cut was dead, and the problem of the producers was how to get out gracefully. It was here that the Academy stepped to the front and while acting in perfectly good faith consistent with its high ideals, nevertheless became the catspaw of the producers. One thing none of the companies could do was to display its books, and it could not publicly refuse to do so. Take Mayer's position. He had made one of his eloquent speeches to his employees, calling them his partners, and making a virtue of the fact that his own salary was being cut twenty-five per cent. If they had been permitted to see the Metro books his new partners would have made some interesting discoveries. They would have found that Mayer's remuneration is one hundred thousand dollars a year salary and ten per cent. of the profits of the company. Metro is making money. Anything it can save on salaries means just so much more profit. Supposing Mayer's eloquence had benumbed his employees into accepting a cut in salaries equal to his own. Metro has a pay-roll of about two hundred thousand dollars per week. Reducing it by twenty-five per cent. would mean additional profits of two million, six hundred thousand dollars a year. By his self-sacrificing cut upon which he expended so much virtuous eloquence, Mayer would lose twenty-five thousand dollars in salary, but would gain two hundred and sixty thousand dollars as his share of what he had persuaded his new partners to surrender. Other things equally interesting would have been revealed by the books. Why was a location trip during shooting of The Crowd charged on the books at about five times its actual cost? would have been one of the irritating questions the new partners might have asked. None of the studios would dare open its books. The producers could not afford to be on the square with their employees, and as soon as they realized

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Lois Weber's Garden Village 4632 Santa Monica Blvd. that they had to be, or withdraw the salary cut, they adopted the alternative. When they decided to reduce salaries they never for a moment imagined that it would not be accepted humbly by those whom it affected. When they discovered what they were up against they made a masterly retreat. They put the whole industry on trial, found it guilty, made it promise never to do it again, and allowed the Academy to foot all the bills. The sheet brilliancy of it amazes me.

Brilliant Victory For the Producers

EVIEWING the results of the conferences we find that the employees have emerged with nothing to compensate them for the humiliation that was heaped upon them. The producers promised definitely to do only such things as would benefit them; they ignored the request for an eight-hour day, and made an indefinite promise to consider fair standard contracts. Since January fifth of last year a standard contract submitted by the Writers' Guild has been buried in the files of the Hays organization. Why the delay in considering it if the producers had the slightest intention of being on the square with those who write and prepare their stories? Nothing in their past records would indicate that their promise now to take up the matter was made in good faith. Why did the Academy, the champion of the rights of the employees, allow the conferences to close without some definite action being taken towards the adoption of a fair contract? It had in its possession definite proof that the producers intended to put over the salary cut with the aid of the black-balling weapon that they wield with so much agility. Why was it not made public at the banquet that Warner Brothers told two of their contract employees that if they did not accept the salary cut they would find every studio in Hollywood closed against them? The Academy knew that such a threat had been made, but it was such a humble tool in the hands of the producers that it was afraid to give utterance to its knowledge. All the speakers extolled the Academy for restoring harmony in the industry. It is the kind of harmony that the cat felt while it was digesting the canary. Friends of The Spectator have urged it to maintain the spirit of harmony by refraining from discussing the results of the conferences. They ask me not to stir things up by discussing the producers personally, to avoid allowing my personal feelings towards them to enter into the controversy. If any producer feels that I have any personal interest in him he flatters himself. The single aim of The Spectator is at better pictures, and it can accomplish nothing if it shoots around corners in an effort to keep from hitting those who stand between it and its target. It is thinking only of the target and it intends to keep on firing. If any producers are hit it is because they are standing in the line of the bullets, and not because they themselves draw the fire. There is no individual connected with pictures

TOM REED
Titles

big enough to be the subject of concern when the future of screen art is being considered. When I contemplate the masterly manner in which the producers emerged triumphant from a situation that was frought with danger to their dignity and credit, I have a feeling of respect for them that I never felt before. I am sorry that I can not see eye to eye with them. I would like to line up with such a resourceful bunch. But I have no interest in their welfare, nor in the welfare of those who work for them. I have an abiding respect for the screen as an art. I believe it can be made the greatest of all arts, and that is all that concerns me. All the great benefits that have come to mankind have been born of turmoil. There will have to be a revolution in pictures before they achieve their destiny. I thought I saw it coming when the salary cut turmoil began, but I did not count on the extraordinary astuteness of the producers. But they only have staved off the revolution; they have not averted it. They will present their clean bill of health to Wall Street, but sooner or later Wall Street will be able to appraise it at its true value. The grotesque waste of money in making pictures must come to an end. The conferences evolved nothing to end it. The confessions of the employees were just about as absurd and fruitless as the promises of the producers will prove to be. I do not believe that the present personnel will do anything to improve conditions. But Nother succor is on the way. New capital is becoming interested. The temptation to tell you all about it is strong within me, but it will keep. It will not be long before we are getting better pictures made sanely.

But One Idea in "The Unknown"

OD BROWNING had just one idea when as author and director he was working out The Unknown: a fake armless wonder who became a real one by having his arms amputated because he believes the girl he loves will like him better that way; and while he is being pared the girl falls in love with someone else. One idea in a story I'll admit is more than the average, but even in a picture that is fortunate enough to possess one, there should be a few collateral ideas to help make it entertaining. In The Unknown we are aware all the time that there is but one idea and we can detect evidences of the painstaking labor to build up to it. The idea itself is ridiculous, if we are to take the picture seriously, which I presume is what Browning would like us to do. In any event, a production with a star of the importance of Lon Chaney is important enough to occupy a critic's attention. In writing a screen story you can not base the biggest situation in it on anything in itself beyond credence. Joan Crawford does nothing to show Chaney that she loves him, yet he deliberately has his arms amputated because he thinks she is going to marry him. It is unbeliavable that a man would do such a fool thing, therefore the whole story is unconvincing and uninteresting. Browning no doubt wanted to present Chaney as a victim of the irony of fate, but overlooked an obvious opportunity to do it effectively. He should have shown Joan madly in love with the man she thought was armless. This would have got away from the over-strain in registering Joan's purely manufactured distate of men's hands, and it would have given a semblance of reason to Chaney's action in

whittling himself down to the dimensions that Joan loved. Fate could have stepped into the picture while Chaney was at the hospital and transferred Joan's affections from Chaney to Kerry, Chaney's unexplained absence being the impelling motive. There would have been some irony in such a situation, and it would have made it an infinitely better story. I don't think Tod Browning ever will give us a great picture as he is too firmly addicted to all the moss-grown methods of constructing one. His habit of spoiling most of his sequences by showing them entirely in close-ups plays havoc with The Unknown. He does not seem to consider it of any importance to plant the relation of the characters in a scene to one another. In one sequence in this picture Chaney and Joan speak titles into the air and there is nothing to show that they are in the same county. At the end of the sequence Joan exits and joins Lon, which finally clears up the mystery of to whom each was speaking. The good director is he who can put over a scene while keeping his main characters in it. Browning never has revealed an ability to do this. In a measure he has a fine pictorial eye and succeeds in intriguing our visual sense without making any appeal to our brains. It is too bad that the fine actor of Mr. Wu is wasted in such a grotesque offering as The Unknown. Joan Crawford is very satisfactory in this picture and to me her characterization is the only meritorious feature of the production. Elaborate care is taken to acquaint the audience with the fact that she has a fine figure, to which I certainly offer no objection. I feel grateful to Browning for demonstrating to me that she has beautiful legs. I also was glad to note, when my mind was not occupied with its reaction to her legs and the rest of her physical self, that she is coming on as an actress. Norman Kerry and John George pleased me when they were not in scenes with Joan. When they were I did not notice them.

Milton Sills in a Very Poor Picture

NE lieutenant in the American air force had a fine time in France during the war. Milton Sills plays him in Hard Boiled Haggerty. He soaks his major in the jaw, bawls out a general and a lot of staff officers sitting as a board of inquiry, to-hells the United States army as a whole, tears off his uniform and throws it on the floor, and then indulges in some high and lofty ranting that must have played havoc with the cords in his neck when the scene was being shot. Following that a girl, who simply is too sweet to be a street walker, says she is one, all is forgiven, the general picks the uniform from the floor and emotionally assists Milton to put it on. After the war is over Milton and his major stage a party, a character named Klaxon horns in, the street walker person also walks in, and Milton, wearing the uniform of a United States officer, drags her out of a cafe to ask her if she can remember what she was to him, and there is a fade-in to Milt moping at midnight in front of a fire. The girl comes to him and we discover she is a twin. In fact, both of her come, which clears the mystery. Milt becomes the brother-in-law of the street walker, and the curtains draw together in front of the screen. It is a silly picture. To start with, Milton Sills has no business playing opposite a seventeen-year-old girl. If so young a girl must be in a picture with him he should play her father,

not her sweetheart. Nor should he ever attempt a character part of this sort. Not in one scene in Hard Boiled Haggerty is he at all convincing. His heroics in front of the board of inquiry might have had some merit if the whole sequence had not been so extremely absurd and so contrary to all military traditions. Never at any time is the audience allowed to forget that he is a movie star. It is stressed that he spends ten days A. W. O. L. in Paris. When he returns his major hugs him and pins a Distinguished Service Cross on his manly breast. He gives the cross to the girl. Keeping the audience in ignorance of the fact that Molly O'Day is playing a dual role is an infantile trick that defies all rules of dramatic construction. The audience discovers it only in the closing sequence, and then it can't remember which was the street walker and which the sweet girl in the earlier scenes. If we had known all the way through that Molly was playing a dual role we might have been able to appraise her performance, and certainly we could have followed the story more intelligently. We can thank the censors for being instrumental in keeping Molly from being shown entirely naked. Wid Gunning, who produced the picture for First National, registered the fact that he would have preferred to show her naked, but was afraid that the censors, who prevent real art being presented on the screen, would foolishly cut it out. In an early scene he reveals an exquisite taste in comedy. He shows where Arthur Stone vomited over the side of an airplane. It is a beautiful touch. When I see evidences of such real genius, such perfect taste and ennobling inspiration, I bow down to the great minds that conceive it. The only male acting in the picture is done by Mitchell Lewis as the major, and by George Fawcett, who has a small part. Molly O'Day has something. I never saw her before, but she impressed me very much. She is a pert looking little miss. I would like to see her again before passing final judgment, but she looks to me at first glance as a young woman who is worth watching. The picture shows how badly First National needs some screen brains on its lot. It is the kind of production that brings discredit on the whole industry.

Curtiz Gives Us a Very Good One

HE acclimatization of Michael Curtiz is proceeding apace. He is making progress in accommodating his foreign conception of directing a picture to the conditions he finds over here. He and Buster Collier are the heroes of The Devil's Paradise, which he recently has made for Warner Brothers as a starring vehicle for Irene Rich. In this picture Irene also advances a step. Her characterization is a dramatic one, that of a woman who does not know what she wants. She marries Bill Russell in order to exchange London for the Sahara, for she pictures the desert as a place of romantic beauty. But she finds that its merciless sun, the maddening symmetry of its burning sands, the unbroken silence of its unending days are poor relief from London's drabness. She lets herself go, is careless of her personal appearance, and almost untrue to her marriage vows. It is the best bit of work that I ever have seen her do. But Collier carries off the acting honors, partly because he has a more dominant part than the star, but principally by the conviction

and understanding that he puts into his work. It is a highly dramatic part and he rises to heights that I never before have seen him attain. He is going to be heard from. John Miljan gives a splendid performance of a man who loses his reason on account of his sufferings when he is lost in the desert. It is a part that could have been entrusted safely only to an actor of ability, and Miljan is that. It offers temptations to overdo it, something that Miljan avoids. Russell is wholly equal to the demands of his characterization, but I could not help wishing that he could have been a little more English in appearance and mannerisms as he was playing the part of an English army officer. Curtiz has directed the picture with rare regard for its dramatic and pictorial possibilities. He eschews the freak shots that spoiled his Third Degree, and instead gives us some desert views of extraordinary beauty. When Miljan breaks out of his cell and imagines he is leading his soldiers, Curtiz shows us the shadowy forms of the imaginary force advancing across the screen, a very effective shot both dramatically and pictorially. Devil's Paradise is so unlike the usual Warner picture that we would gather from it that Curtiz is left pretty much alone. Certainly the excellence of his direction bears none of the outward evidences of the inefficient supervision that generally makes the pictures of this studio such very indifferent examples of screen art. It is only when we come to the studio's contribution to it that we find any weaknesses. The story is based on a faulty premise. Miljan, an insane man, is going to tell Russell that the latter's wife had an affair with Collier. For the double purpose of saving his life and the woman's reputation Collier shoots Miljan. At the court martial he refuses to explain why he shot the demented man, and is sentenced to life in prison. His silence would prompt gossip which quite naturally might point its finger at the wife, for you can't keep things hidden in a small garrison. Collier could have made sure of saving her reputation and avoiding his own life sentence by telling part of the truth: that the demented man had broken out of his cell and attacked Collier, who had to shoot to save his own life. It would have been a reasonable explanation and it would not have been questioned. The whole story is based on the killing and the court-martial, and as the scenarist made a poor job of handling them in the script, the picture will not stand up under a critical analysis. There is another typical Warner Brothers contribution to this production: grossly ignorant punctuation of titles and an idiotic use of italics. Isn't there at least one person on the Warner lot who knows how the English language should be written?

Chaney in a New Character Study

ON CHANEY'S latest, Mockery, ends just where it should be beginning. It is a character study of a simple-minded Russian peasant, and from an acting standpoint is one of the best things that Chaney ever has done. But the story lacks finality. Barbara Bedford, who comes mighty close to stealing the picture owing to her convincing interpretation of a Russian aristocrat, enlists the service of Chaney to guide her to a town. Her beauty and grace appeal to the simple fellow, and he becomes her slave. At the end of a logical sequence of events

leading up to the outbreak of the Red revolution, he defies her, but later she saves his life, in return for which he defends her from attack by two revolutionists. He is battered in his encounter with the pair, but as I gathered from the closing scene he will survive his wounds and continue in the service of the lady. The story ends with the apparent victory of the loyal troops. But we know that the victory could have been but temporary; that the Reds won out finally. What, then, happened to the aristocrat and the peasant after the peasantry was all-powerful? We know that right after the story ends the position of the two was reversed. The most interesting phase of their relations came then. Even though the picture runs seven reels, I felt when it ended that it just had got nicely under way, and I would have been content to view several more reels of it, for it had interested me all the way through. Benjamin Christensen wrote and directed the story. I am of the opinion that he overlooked a wonderful opportunity—an opportunity to center the spirit of the revolution in the mind of one peasant and portray his mental development from a serf to a ruler, from one of the oppressed to an oppressor. When the picture started I thought that this was what he was going to do, but except for one brief moment when it looked as if the peasant's mind was about to break through its primitive simplicity, Chaney's characterization has no high spots Sto give it relief. But as a study in simplicity it is a very worthy piece of acting, although I believe the picture will not be popular. Chaney's appearances are coming too frequently for his own good. He should not make more than two a year. He is a tremendous box office favorite now, and Metro, in attempting to cash in on that fact, is overplaying its hand. Mockery shows every evidence of hasty production. Technically it is a very bad picture. The lighting is pale, uninteresting and faulty. We have several views of a cellar which is lighted through the opening of a trap-door which leads to it. In one scene the door is closed without affecting the lighting. The characters look up at the closed door and the light still streams down on their faces. Again we have that common faultthe lighting of a medium shot and of a close-up of it not corresponding. And there are ten times as many closeups as there should be. One important sequence has as its motivating point the butler's failure to serve cream with tea. In Russia they don't serve cream with tea. Barbara Bedford and Ricardo Cortez have a love scene in the middle of a wide-open park, a la movie. Characters in a hurry to get from one point to another stop at the chalk mark placed on the floor by the assistant cameraman, wave their arms, say something, and resume being in a hurry. Even Cortez, enraptured by the prospect of taking his sweetheart in his arms, pauses in the doorway to wave at her, very much a la movie. When this picture is released a lot of people will share my opinion that Barbara Bedford is one of the most capable young actresses we have. I don't know any other who could

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934 FOURTH STREET SANTA MONICA PHONE 23730 SANTA MONICA have played the aristocrat as convincingly as she does in Mockery.

Maynard's Latest Is Without Merit

NCE upon a time I encountered a preview of Overland Stage, a Ken Maynard Western. It pleased me so much that right then and there I decided to let hunting Maynard previews become a habit. The next I saw was not so good. One I saw the other night was very bad. I've broken off the habit. The best thing about The Devil's Saddle is the punctuation of the titles. It is perfect except for the absence of an interrogation mark after the question, "Who's cuckoo now?" The only other entirely satisfactory feature of the production is the acting of Tarzan, the horse. He outshines the star and everyone else in the cast. The picture is just a Western movie, full of all the fool things that you find in most pictures of the sort. Charles R. Rogers is the producer. Once he told me that he was simply a business men with some knowledge of life, and that one thing I could count on in any picture of his was the absence of things that anyone with common sense knew were not done in real life. Yet in The Devil's Saddle we have Ken Maynard being kept in jail for three months waiting to see if a man he was accused of shooting would die of his wounds. A title tells us that as the man lived Maynard was released. I believe the practice in real life is to do something to a man who shoots another, even if the shootee does not kick the bucket. Later Maynard is accused of killing another man, with whom he is having a fight when the real villain fires the fatal shot. Will Walling, Ken's father, is sheriff. He asks Ken, for whom things look very bad indeed, if he committed the nefarious crime. Ken says he did not. That settles it. The sheriff and the law are satisfied. But the sheriff happens to ask his son why he was fighting with the man who was killed. Ken will not tell. That changes everything. It convinces Walling that Ken really is a murderer. The sheriff resigns by taking off his badge, and he pins it on the vest of another fellow, thus signifying that the other fellow is sheriff. Generally we have elections to determine who is sheriff. Somewhere along in the picture Walling is accused of killing someone, and the case against him is considered conclusive, because a man speaks a title, "I have his horse as evidence." How a horse can be evidence I don't know. There are three off-stage killings in the picture, but when the Indians attack the ranch house and hundreds of shots are fired by the red and white sharpshooters, some of whom are at all times exposed, not one of them is winged even. The story is announced as being one of the "Modern West", but is full of decorated Indians, barrooms, guns and much shooting. I thought these were features of the pre-modern West. The Devil's Saddle looks as if it might have been produced by a bunch of children playing at making a motion picture. It is silly all the way through and does not contain one logical sequence. I still maintain that there is a wonderful field throughout the world for really good Westerns, and at one time I thought that Rogers, the business man, had enough business acumen to make it peculiarly his own. In Maynard he has a good looking chap who is one of the best riders in the world, but he is being spoiled as an attraction just as fast as

Rogers can spoil him. There is no excuse for any producing organization turning out a picture as utterly ridiculous as this one.

However, This One Isn't So Very Bad

ND just to make me eat my words about Maynard pictures in general, Charlie Rogers invited me to view another one within a week after I saw Devil's Saddle. This time it was The Red Raiders, and after it goes through a pruning process it will be a pretty good picture. Indians are good screen material, and there are a lot of them in this picture. There is one sequence showing them endeavoring to wipe out the whites, which include two troops of United States cavalry, the period being directly following the Civil war. Albert Rogell has directed this sequence so well that it of itself is quite enough to make good entertainment out of any picture containing it. There is the old hokum of the troops riding hard to relieve the garrison and arriving at the moment when the Indians are about to begin the scalping, but it is handled so well that we forget it is hokum, and we cheer when the cavalry comes pounding down the hill. After all, the old thrills are the best. There is some smart cutting in this sequence. A medium shot of a man aiming and firing is followed instantly by a long shot of someone doing a remarkable fall. Rogell handles both the troops and the Indains in a manner that makes the sequence highly dramatic and gripping. There are scenes in it that are magnificent. The flight of the settlers in their covered wagons, the Indians leaving camp to wage their warfare, and the troops spreading out as they rush to the rescue of the hard-pressed white men are as stirring as anything that I have seen in pictures in a long time. Rogell is competent at this kind of direction. In his intimate scenes he does not show the same sureness. I do not know whether it was he or the author who made a wholly impossible character of an army captain. He is so unreal that no scene in which he appears carries any conviction. Rogell is happier in handling comedians. There are three in Red Raiders, and they are in it a little too much. "Comedy relief" is one of the several things that are put in pictures mechanically. It is something that some producers think must be in, and, although they do not know why, they put it in. In this picture we have several stirring scenes showing Maynard doing some of his magnificent riding. He is breaking a wild horse. Every time the struggle between the man and the horse grows exciting there is a cut to some inane antics of people unrelated to the action. I presume such action is put in a picture to entertain the audience. Frequent cuts to people to show their reaction to it would indicate that its sole purpose was to provide an excuse for some unfunny comedy. Such cutting shows that the maker of the picture does not attach as much importance to the drama in the scenes as he obviously must desire the audience to attach to it. Drama should be built up. It is torn down when a lot of silly stuff is injected into it. The first part of Red Raiders is weakened greatly by tiresome comedy which breaks the thread of the story, and the story is not strong enough to bridge such gaps successfully. But it provides Maynard with some opportunities to do some of his superb riding. In one shot he leaps from a stage coach, knocks a man off a horse and takes his place in the saddle, the whole thing being done with bewildering speed and neatness. Maynard's horse, Tarzan, is a magnificent beast and has become my favorite screen equine hero. I) would be quite content to gaze on five or six reels of nothing but him and Maynard. I can't reconcile Devil's Saddle and Red Raiders. It is hard to believe that they were turned out by the same organization.

George Melford Scores With Veidt

ONRAD VEIDT came to this country with the reputation of being Europe's greatest screen actor. Several of the intelligent members of the foreign colonly in Hollywood rated him as the greatest in the world. In John Barrymore's Beloved Rogue Veidt gave a very fine performance, but the part was not big enough to permit us to judge fully of his ability. We get a better view of him in A Man's Past, his first starring picture in this country, directed by George Melford for Universal. Veidt and Melford share the honors of the production. The former is a gifted actor, and the latter an intelligent director. The star's characterization is that of a skilled surgeon who escapes from prison and thereafter lives in constant dread of being discovered and sent back to his cell. The story is dignified by the fine friendship that exists between Veidt and Ian Keith, and the romance in which Veidt and that capable actress, Barbara Bedford, figure. The star gains his effects without any of the over-acting that is not unusual with European actors. He was fortunate in having good direction in his first starring picture, as Melford built his scenes in a manner that enables Veidt to get everything out of them. The chief feature of Veidt's performance is the evident sincerity that he puts into every scene. He has an expressive, intellectual face, and a compelling screen personality. The opening sequence in the picture grips the audience. It is directed splendidly, bringing out vividly all the miseries of prison life. The lighting and the composition of the scenes are effective. There is a quick change from them to a waterfront cafe, a scene that reflects perhaps the best individual bit of direction in the picture. Most of our directors are not able to handle more than two or three characters in a scene, and leave their background people to take care of themselves, which they do like a lot of sticks. Melford makes his cafe realistic, and gives the scene the further virtue of having its central action carried on in a manner that in real life would not attract the attention of the patrons of the place. There is a wide diversity of scenes in the picture—a prison, a laboratory, operating-room, drawing-room, an oasis, and wide expanses of sand, and in all of them Melford is equally sure of himself. The faults of the picture seem to be the faults of the editing. Emil Forst's continuity leaves nothing to be desired, and Tom Reed has written a good set of titles, but in places the film drags on account of poor cutting. Scenes that are important only as advancing the story are cut into closeups at a time when they should move along with the least amount of interruption. A sample of the wooden cutting is given in the final fadeout. It is preceded by a beautiful desert scene in which the lovers are quite distinct. It is an ideal shot for the fadeout, but convention demands & close-up of the clinch, and there is an utterly brainless cut

to such a scene as the picture concludes. But A Man's Past is, on the whole, a thoroughly satisfactory picture, and is a good introduction of Veidt as a new star. Charles Logue is credited with being story supervisor, and if the merits of the story can be attributed to his supervision he deserves considerable credit for the success of the production. Paul Kohner produced the picture. He is a young man who is making progress.

Langdon's Last Is a Very Poor Thing

THEN it was announced that Harry Langdon was to direct his latest picture there no longer was any doubt about what kind of a picture it would be. I saw it the other night. It is just the kind of picture you would expect it to be. Langdon apparently was generous with his dispensations. In addition to a director, he seems to have dispensed with author, continuity writer, editor and cutter. Three's a Crowd is a pitiful thing. Throughout its wearisome reels there are some evidences of Langdon's talent for superficial pantomime, but it all means nothing, as there is not one genuinely funny scene in the entire picture. Surrounded by people with picture sense he could become a great box office favorite. It is too bad to see his value ruined by his own inability to grasp the fact that he is just a screen comedian who needs all the outside help he can get to put him over with the public. One would gather from Three's a Crowd that there was no one with picture brains on the lot when it was made. One solemn sequence follows another without presenting one moment of real comedy. There is an attempt at symbolism that is too deep for me-shots of a rag doll undergoing various hardships. I have no idea what was meant by them. It makes no difference in a motion picture what idea the producer had in his mind when he made a certain sequence; what counts is what the audience sees in it. There is an attempt at a story. A girl leaves her dissolute husband, and it is planted that somewhere in the offing there are rich relatives of one or the other of them. Instead of going to one of the homes that must have been open to her, the girl lies on the snow to die, or something. Harry finds her, takes her to his room, and she rewards him by promptly giving birth to a baby. Which surprises him. Thereafter the newly born baby becomes the chief prop and is treated in a way that will make every parent in an audience shiver. It is perhaps the most stupid exhibition of screen psychology that I ever saw in a picture. When the girl's husband finds her-how he does it is not made clear-the mother hands the baby to the chauffeur, who takes it to the waiting car. Can you imagine a mother handling a baby as if it were a bundle of laundry? That single incident shows the absolute lack of intelligence that entered into the making of the picture. I do not blame the members of Langdon's staff for not understanding mother love. Perhaps they are bachelors who have had no contact with it. What I blame them for is putting in a picture something of which they are entirely ignorant, and not getting someone with knowledge of the subject to tell them what to do with it. I don't know what I was supposed to do, cry or laugh, when the family departs and leaves Langdon holding a lamp at the top of a flight of steps. Perhaps the scene is a pathetic one, but I would have to read the

script to make sure. Early in the career of The Spectator I predicted the rapid diminishing of Langdon's drawing power if he did not secure better stories. I predicted that his first two pictures would make considerable money on account of exploitation, and that the third would make a much poorer showing. In the last issue Norman Webb showed with his percentage table that in the list of the two hundred and two pictures that made most money for exhibitors during the past eighteen months, The Strong Man was seventieth, Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, seventy-fifth, and Long Pants two hundred and second. The figures seem to bear out my prediction. The Langdon pictures come away below those of the other established comedians. And the pity of it is that he has talent, but not enough sense to give it a chance.

Clara Bow in Hopeless Mess

TULA, Clara Bow's latest, not yet released, is going to be another financial winner for Paramount. And it ultimately is going to cost Paramount a lot of money. A great many millions of people will view it because Clara is in it, and most of them are going to be so disappointed that they will be chary about picking another of her pictures as a source of an evening's entertainment. Hula is aggressively bad. Most pictures that you don't like fail to please you because of their sins of omission. Hula annoys you because of its sins of commission. Clara, the vibrant young American girl who can be sweet and devilish, fascinating and tantalizing, all at the same time, in this picture is a brainless little fool who makes a dead set for a married man. The whole story is one of her love affair with the man who already has a wife, and in the end Clara lies to the wife to lead her to get a divorce. Imagine that for the girl whom millions of girls all over the world have grown to admire as a typical product of an American home! True, an effort is made to excuse the wildness of the yarn by planting that the man is unhappy with his wife. It is an excuse that will not be accepted. If Paramount had undertaken deliberately to injure Clara's box-office standing it could not have selected a better vehicle. Hula lacks one redeeming feature. Every time we are given a glimpse of Clara's home it is filled with a crowd of drunken people, and her father boasts that he sobers up only once a year. The drunkenness is inserted for whatever entertainment value it has on its own account, for there is no other excuse for it. Clara ultimately gets drunk herself, undresses herself and dances for the edification of a wild crowd. Her action is instrumental in starting a most ridiculous fight between Clive Brook, the hero-husband, and Arnold Kent. Brook is supposed to be an English gentleman, and it must have been disturbing to that fine actor to be forced to depict someone's conception of such a character. To start with, he is much too old to play opposite Clara, and if he had been a real man he would have told her in their first encounter that he was a married man. Clara's dog runs out of the house as a ruse to break up a bridge game by making Brook desert it to give chase to the dog. The dog falls into a stream of water and Brook heroically dives in to rescue it. It is supposed to be a thrilling scene, but as the whole sequence is based on someone's absolute ignorance of the way of a dog, it is ridiculous. In the first place,

(Continued on page 14)

STORY OF THE BOX-OFFICE

By NORMAN WEBB

NOTE BY THE EDITOR—The figures which are presented herewith should not be accepted as The Spectator's opinion of the relative merits of the individuals whose names appear in the lists. For instance: Eric Pommer is eleventh on the list of supervisors, yet anyone who knows anything about pictures knows that he has no equal in the world for picture intelligence. Thalberg leads the supervisors, which means that with all the money in the world and many famous stars at his disposal he made pictures which took in more money at the box-office than those of any other supervisor. Pommer can make better pictures for half the money that Thalberg spends, but has not been allowed by Metro to do so. Thalberg can claim to be a great supervisor when he can duplicate Pommer's feat of using five different directors and little known people and turning out Variety, Faust, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, The Last Laugh, Waltz Dream, and Metropolis.

It will be noticed that J. G. Bachman, who recently has been appointed to supervise the Emil Jannings productions, is at the foot of the supervisors' list. Giving the most inefficient supervisor one of the greatest stars is perhaps the lowest point to which the supervisor system can sink. It emphasizes how wildly absurd the system is.

An interesting feature of the writers' list is that Harry Behn's name ranks the same as Laurence Stallings's. Behn is a new writer who contributed a few scenes to each of two successful pictures, getting credit thereby on the screen for being joint author of them. He has yet to win his spurs as a screen writer, consequently little importance may be attached to the fact that his two pictures give him a higher rating than the authors who have many successful screen stories to their credit.

Norman Webb has compiled his lists as a result of keeping tab on box-office returns for the past eighteen months. A house that does seventy per cent. of its capacity business makes money. The Spectator lists do not go much below seventy per cent., as to publish all the names would occupy too much space. But we have in our possession the rating of every writer, director, supervisor, star, and featured player in the business.

WRITERS

	Per	cent.		Per ce	ent.		Per c	ent.
1	Fred De Gresac	100	30	Al Cohn	76		Sylvia Thalberg	72
2	Bess Meredyth	92		Chas. Logue	76		Clara Barenger	72
3	Laurence Stallings	91		Paul Bern	75		Sam Mintz	72
4	Harry Behn	91		Josephine Lovett	75		Owen Davis	72
5	Frances Marion	88		C. Gardner Sullivan	75		J. Grubh Alexander	72
6	John McDermott	87		Adelaide Heilbron	75		J. Clarkson Miller	72
7	Lenore Coffee	86		Roland West	75		Lillie Hayward	72
8	Dorothy Farnum	86	37	Becky Gardiner	75	66	Al Boasherg	72
9	Elliott Clawson	85	38	Lloyd Corrigan	75	67	Florence Ryerson	71
10	Hans Kraly	84		J. Shelly Hamilton	75		Earl Snell	71
11	Ben Glazer	84		Agnes Christine Johnson	75	69	Al Lewin	71
	Loring & Lighton	83	41	Elinor Glyn	75	70	Arthur Ripley	71
	Waldemar Young	82	42	F. McGrew Willis	74	71	Townsend Martin	71
14	Louise Long	81		J. Franklin Poland	74	72	Violet Powell	71
15	Ethel Dougherty	81		Byron Morgan	74	73	Alice D. G. Miller	71
16	Forest Halsey	80	45	Jas. Creelman	74	74	Jerome Wilson	71
17	Jas. Donohue	79	46	Max Marcin	74	75	Dorothy Howell	71
18	Jeannie McPherson	79	47	Howard Emmet Rogers	74	76	Kate Corbaley	71
19	E. Richard Schayer	78	48	Finis Fox	74	77	Gerald Duffy	70
20	Jules Furthman	77		Lotta Woods	73	78	Earl Brown	70
21	Winifred Dunn	77	50	Rex Taylor	73	79	Graham Baker	70
22	Lorna Moon	77	51	Elizabeth Meehan	73	80	Al Shelby Levino	70
23	Pierre Collings	77	52	John Goodrich	73	81	Agnes Pat McKenna	70
24	Carey Wilson	77	53	Lajos Biro	73	82	Tay Garnett	70
25	Julien Josephson	76		Wallace Smith	73	83	Fred & Fanny Hatton	70
26	Willis Goldbeck	76	55	Ray Schrock	73	84	Harvey Thew	70
27	Paul Schofield	76		Marion Orth	73		Doris Anderson	70
	Daryll F. Zanuck	76		Wade Boteler	73	36	Mary O'Hara	70
29	Ray Harris	76	58	June Mathis	72			

SUPERVISORS

	Per c	ent.	Per o	cent.	Per c	ent.
1	Irving Thalherg	85	10 John McCormick	77	19 Bennie Zeidman	73
2	John Considine Jr	84	11 Eric Pommer	77	20 C. Gardiner Sullivan	72
3	Sam Goldwyn	82	12 Wm. Le Baron	76	21 J. Boyce Smith	72
4	Winnie Sheehan	80	13 Al Rockett	76	22 Carey Wilson	72
			14 Hector Turnbull		23 Daryl Zanuck	
6	Lloyd Sheldon	87	15 Harry Rapf	75	24 Hunt Stromherg	71
7	Ralph Block	78	16 Eph. Asher	75	25 Henry Hennigson	71
8	Jack Warner	78	17 Louis Lighton	73	26 Bernie Hymen	71
9	Julian Johnston	78	18 Harry Cohn	73	27 Henry Hobart	70

In the last Spectator were published ratings on pictures released during the last eighteen months. In this Spectator we are publishing the box office ratings on supervisors, directors, writers, stars and featured players. The percentages after the names of these different personalities represent their batting averages on all of their releases since the box-office check-up was originated eighteen months ago.

The figures should be studied very carefully to get their real values. For example, Barney Glazer may have Flesh and the Devil and Seventh Heaven listed as 100% capacity business, yet he is only rated at 84% on the writers' list because some of his former weaker releases, such as Everybody's Acting (64%) and The Gay Deceiver (68%), pull his final

average down.

As new box-office figures are received from week to week, the various pictures automatically will be raised or lowered. This applies also to the rating lists for the supervisors, directors, writers, etc.

WRITERS

In our writers' list, we have only listed screen writers, as playwrights' and novelists' box office values will be listed separately at a later date when the statistics are all in and compiled. However, in a few instances where playwrights and novelists have written directly for the screen, they are listed in the scenarists' column as above. It is especially interesting to compare Barney Glazer's rating, 84%, with that of Carey Wilson, 77%, and Daryll Zanuck, 76%.

After Glazer's sweeping success on the Merry Widow script, he started out writing scenarios in huge quantities, disregarding quality, with the result that many of them were failures. So he again reversed his writing, and, taking much more time on his scripts, he has written two of the most successful continuities of the year—Flesh and the Devil and Seventh Heaven. Accordingly, he has been rewarded for his great masterpieces by being promoted to a featured unit producer at the Famous studio.

On the other hand, Wilson and Zanuck are both applying Glazer's old tactics of quantity rather than quality to their work. I believe I am quite safe in saying that both Wilson and Zanuck have written and sold almost twice as many screen plays to the First National and Warner studios, to whom they are under contract respectively, than any other writers in the profession. And, besides all of their writing and adapting, they are both supervisors. Wilson is supervisor for Billie Dove and Korda-all-star units at First National, and Zanuck is associate supervisor of all production at the Warner Brothers' studio,

which is a position similar to that held by Irving Thalberg at M.-G.-M. By comparing the figures on Glazer's recent releases with those of Carey Wilson's and Zanuck's with those of Thalberg's, one readily sees that it is quality and not quantity that takes the cake in the motion pic-

ture industry.

Therefore, I am forced to agree with Mary Pickford's statement at a recent meeting of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, when she said, "The trouble with the picture industry is not a question of salaries, but rather one of so many inferior productions. In other words, we need fewer and better pictures.'

SUPERVISORS

The supervisors' rating list seems to prove that the many Irving Thalberg enthusiasts in Hollywood and Culver City are right,-that he is a real genius, even if he is the youngest executive in the motion picture industry. I believe he was 27 years old last March.

While Thalberg heads the supervisors' list at the present time, he is going to have a hard fight during the coming year to stay on top. Johnnie Considine, who rates second to Thalberg, has been batting out some excellent stuff, and if he doesn't let any more pictures like Topsy and Eva come out of the United Artists studio he is going to climb much higher.

In glancing over the supervisors' rating sheet it is very important to consider two things: first, the amount of money allowed to the supervisors per production, and, second, the number of pictures that they are supervising per year.

Thalberg and Ben Schulberg have the biggest executive positions in the industry. They are responsible for the largest number of first-run produc-tions, especially Schulberg, since Paramount has closed its Long Island studio and brought Le Baron here to take charge of its F. B. O. studio.

While Thalberg has more 100% releases than any other supervisor has had or ever may have, he also has allowed a few "lemons" to slip through his fingers, thus tearing his batting average down to 85%. The last "lemon" that went out under Thalberg's supervision was Eddie Goulding's ill-fated production, Women Love Diamonds Love Diamonds.

After Greta Garbo had said "thumbs down" on this story it was handed to Mae Murray, who in turn said "Adios" and departed for Europe. The picture finally was made with Pauline Starke playing the lead, but her weak boxoffice value, despite the fact that she is a very clever artiste, plus the very poor story, caused it to flop miserably from coast to coast.

10

11

18 19

24 25 26

Although the Paramount Production costs have been exceptionally high in the last year, much credit must be given to Ben Schulberg for saving the name Paramount from utter ruin. Approximately 15 months

(Continued on page 19)

SUPERVISORS — Continued

Per c	ent.		Per cent.	Per cer	n t.
28 Lucien Hubbard	70	34 J. D. Williams	68	40 Ray Rockett	67
29 Eddie Montaigne	70	35 Frank Griffin	68	41 Charlie Rogers	66
				42 C. C. Burr	63
31 Sam Rork	68	37 June Mathis	67	43 Harry "Joe" Brown	62
				44 Wid Gunning	
33 Sol Wurtzel	68	39 Mike Levee	67	45 J. G. Bachman	59
				-	

DIRECTORS

	Per	cent.	Per cent.		Per	cent.
1	King Vidor	-96 32	Fritz Lang 77	63	Roy Del Ruth	*72
		*95 33	Richard Wallace 77	64	E. H. Griffith	72
3	Clarence Brown	*92 34	Allan Dwan 77	65	Robt. Vignola	72
4	Cecil B. de Mille	91 35	Bill Beaudine77	66	Rupert Julian	72
5	Geo. Fitzmaurice	-90 36	Rex Ingram77	67	Ted Sloman	-72
6	Eddie Sutherland	-88 37	Hobart Henley 76		E. Mason Hopper	-72
7	Alan Crosland		Frank Lloyd 76	69	Herbert Wilcox	-72
8	Henry King	86 39	Frank Strayer 76	70	Ralph Ince	-72
9	Von Stroheim		Jack Conway 76	71	Harmon Weight	-72
10	Tod Browning		Richard Rosson76		Rowland Lee	*71
11	Clarence Badger	*84 42	E. A. Dupont76	73	J. G. Blystone	*71
	R. A. Walsh		D. W. Griffith76		James Flood	71
13	Ernst Lubitsch	-83 44	Al Parker75	7.5	Mickey Neilan	71
14	Victor Seastrom	*83 45	Jack Ford75		Ludwig Berger	
	Mauritz Stiller	83 46	Sam Wood*74		James Horne	
16	James Cruze	-82 47			Dorothy Arzner	
	Syd Franklin	*81 48	Eddie Cline 74		Paul Stein	71
18	Millard Webb	*81 49			Mel Brown	71
		**80 50	Robt. Leonard 74		John Stahl	-71
	John Robertson	80 51	Howard Hawks 74		Donald Crisp	-71
21	Will Nigh		Bill Howard 74		J. Francis Dillon	*71
22	Mal St. Clair	*79 53	Reg. Barker 74		Billy Wellman	*70
	Roland West	*79 54			Maurice Tourneur	
	Victor Flemming	79 55	Buchowetzki74	86	Svend Gade	70
	Harry Pollard		Michael Curtiz74	87	Bill Seiter	70
	Edwin Carewe		Frank Tuttle74		Victor Schertzinger	-70
27	Al Santell		Monta Bell74	89		-70
	Luther Reed		Monty Brice 73	90		-70
	Chuck Reisner		Gregory La Cava 73	91		
	F. W. Murnau		Frank Capra73		Ed Goulding	-70
	Ed Sedgwick		Fred Newmeyer73		Geo. Archainbaud	
	0 ,					

STARS

	Per	cent.		Per	cent.	Per cen	t.
1	Chas. Chaplin	100	25	Mae Murray	76	49 Eddie Cantor 7	0
2	Douglas Fairbanks	100	26	Emil Jannings	76		0
3	Harold Lloyd	100	27	Constance Talmadge	75		Ç
4	Rudolph Valentino	96	28	Harry Langdon	74		0
5	John Barrymore	93	29	Douglas McLean	74	53 Jackie Coogan 6	9
6	Lon Chaney	92	30	Corinne Griffith	74		8
7	Norma Talmadge	87	31	Richard Barthelmess	74	55 Geo. Jessel 6	8
8	John Gilbert	86	32	Milton Sills	74		8
9	Greta Garbo	86	33	Thomas Meighan	74	57 Marie Prevost 6	7
10	Lillian Gish	86	34	Buster Keaton	74		7
11	Clara Bow	85		Pola Negri	74		7
	Ronald Colman	85		Reginald Denny	73		7
13	Colleen Moore	84	37	Charlie Murray	73	61 Edmund Lowe 6	
14	Wallace Beery	82	38	Billie Dove	73		7
	Richard Dix	81		Dolores Del Rio	73		6
	Mary Pickford	81		Gilda Gray	73		6
	Syd Chaplin	80	41	Florence Vidor	73		6
	Marion Davies	80		Esther Ralston	72		5
19	Vilma Banky	80	43	Ray Griffith	72		5
	Adolphe Menjou	80		Wm. Haines	72		4
	Bebe Daniels	79		Raymond Hatton	71		3
	Norma Shearer	79		Dolores Costello	71		3
	Gloria Swanson	79		Madge Bellamy	71	71 Monty Banks 6	
24	Ramon Navarro	77	48	Monte Blue	70	72 Warner Oland 5	9

			FE	EATURED PLAYE	RS			
	Per c	ent.		Per c	ent.		Perc	ent.
ı	Antonio Moreno	69	29	Aileen Pringle	64	57	May Allison	62
,	Joan Crawford	67	30	Betty Bronson	64	58	Shirley Mason	62
	Jack Mulhall	67	31	Geo. K. Arthur	64	59	Owen Moore	62
ŀ	Lois Moran	67		Alice Joyce	64	60	Mary Brian	62
;	Renee Adoree	67	33	Ricardo Cortez	64	61	Anna Q. Nilsson	62
,	Belle Bennett	67	34	Ford Sterling	64	62	Lois Wilson	62
7	Sally O'Neil	67	35	Conway Tearle	64		Tom Moore	62
3	Dorothy Mackaill	66	36	Lya De Putti	64	64	Pauline Starke	62
)	Charlie Ray	66		Clive Brook	64	65	Louise Brooks	62
)	Louise Dresser	66	38	Neil Hamilton	64	66	Greta Nissen	62
l	Lloyd Hughes	66	39	James Hall	64	67	Henry B. Walthall	62
?	Mary Astor	66		Conrad Nagel	64		Kenneth Harlan	62
3	Noah Beery	66	41	Lionel Barrymore	63	69	Andre Beranger	62
ŀ	Lars Hanson	66	42	Eleanor Boardman	63	70	Hobart Bosworth	62
5	Geo. Bancroft	66	43	Claire Windsor	63	71	Wm, Powell	62
5	Janet Gaynor	66	44	Blanche Sweet	63	72	Roy D'Arcy	61
7	Lewis Stone	66	45	Red Grange	63		Percy Marmont	61
3	Geo. Sydney	65	46	Gary Cooper	63	74	Malcolm McGregor	61
)	Lew Cody	65	47	Jean Hersholt	63	75	Lowell Sherman	61
)	Alice Terry	65	48	Lilyan Tashman	63	76	Francis X. Bushman	61
L	Chester Conklin	65	49	Buster Collier	63	77	John Bowers	61
2	Alma Rubens	65	50	Ken Maynard	62	78	Marion Nixon	61
3	Lawrence Gray	65		Ben Lyon	62	79	Bessie Love	61
\$	Victor McLaglen	65	52	Doris Kenyon	62	80	Robert Edeson	60
5	Leon Errol	64		Warner Baxter	62	81	Carmel Myers	60
5	Chas. Farrell	64		Estelle Taylor	62	82	Ernest Torrence	60
7	Jack Holt	64		Patsy Ruth Miller	62		Vera Gordon	60
3	Zasu Pitts	64	56	Eugene O'Brien	62	84	Holbrook Blinn	60
						85	Evelyn Brent	60

Clara Bow in Hopeless Mess

(Continued from page 11)

the dog would have returned home after treeing the cat he was chasing. In the second place, he would have swam ashore as soon as he fell into the water, and would not have made for the middle of the stream as he does in the picture. In the third place, he could rescue himself a great deal easier than a man could have rescued him. I hope that in Bebe Daniels' latest picture we do not have a scene showing her plunging into the water to save Gertrude Ederle from drowning. It would be on a par with the dog scene in Hula. The only convincing performance in the Bow picture, though, is contributed by the dog. All the humans have ridiculous characterizations. The whole production is full of absolute rot, and the titles that were in it when I saw it aggravate the rest of its faults. Most of them were absurd. I can not understand how a studio can be sufficiently shortsighted as to present a girl star who is riding high on the wave of popularity in a picture so utterly devoid of common sense, good taste, and moral tone.

"Rolled Stockings" Is a Poor Picture

NE of the myteries of Rolled Stockings is its title. "Pickled Pigs' Feet" would have been just as appropriate. Another mystery is why it was made. The story is ridiculous, and the picture gives the impression that the director and the cast knew it was and worked with the single aim of getting through with it. The main weakness of Richard Rosson's direction was his disposition to line up his characters facing the camera. This is a habit that a great many directors have, apparently because someone started doing it a long time ago. No scene can be more natural than the grouping of the characters in it. In the final fade-out David Torrence, Louise Brooks, James Hall, and Richard Arlen have a get-together session at a railway station. They stand in a straight line facing the camera, an utterly absurd way of presenting them. And even if it were permissible on the ground of naturalness, it is not as effective as if the three young people had faced the father, allowing the camera to register the action by showing their backs. Rolled Stockings has a close-up debauch to its discredit, although Bud Lighton's indulgence in this editorial weakness is not quite as wild as Lloyd Sheldon's in The Whirlwind of Youth. If the simple rule of applying reason to the use of close-ups were adopted in motion picture studios we would have more pictures displaying intellectual treatment. The opening sequence in Rolled Stockings shows the home of two boys about to leave for college. Their father and mother are in the scenes with them. It is shown almost entirely in close-ups, thus getting away entirely from the spirit of the sequence. A family is an entity and when one is shown on the screen solely to establish the family idea the illusion is weakened by close-ups which show the different characters as individuals instead of as parts of something that an effort is being made to present as a whole. The group idea should not be destroyed. Some of the close-ups containing the heads of two people add a humorous touch to this picture. In order to get them within the frame and retain the huge proportions of the heads, the characters have to stand so close together that their noses almost touch while they talk. Such ridiculous scenes are things that make movies out of what might have been motion pictures. If you have not seen this picture you will realize to what extreme the close-up evil is carried when I tell you that at times even Louise Brooks's legs are cut out in order to give the audience stupendous views of her features. Although it is a college picture, there is no real college atmosphere in it. A long initiation sequence is utterly devoid of either entertainment or humor. In a boat race sequence yell leaders do their daily dozens in front of groups of elderly people who make no response whatever. Dick Arlen, stroke of his crew, a manly chap who takes to drink on the eve of his race because Louise is going to marry his brother. wears a heavy sweater while rowing in the race. This is the only new thing in the picture, the only thing that never was done before on the screen or in a boat race. Paramount must be hard up for stories when it has to fall back on one which builds its main situation on the fact that the stroke of a crew on the eve of a great race throws down his college by breaking training. It is unheard of. But, anyway, the titles in Rolled Stockings are punctuated properly. It is the only thing to the picture's credit. There is not one single good performance in it.

Paramount seems to be having quite a time choosing someone to play the blonde whom gentlemen prefer. Unless it makes of the Anita Loos story a better picture than it has been averaging lately I can't see that it makes much difference who plays the part. Why not let me play it?

RUPERT JULIAN

DIRECTOR

Productions Which Netted Over One
Million Dollars Each
BEAST OF BERLIN
MERRY-GO-'ROUND
PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

More Recent Productions
THREE FACES EAST
SILENCE
YANKEE CLIPPER

Latest Release
THE COUNTRY DOCTOR

Lewis Stone Is a Poor Headwaiter

HE principal fault of The Prince of Headwaiters is that he is a very poor headwaiter. He does not act at all like one. In Service for Ladies Adolphe Menjou plays a similar role and acts like a headwaiter. The almost simultaneous releases of these two pictures offered an interesting opportunity for comparisons between the work of Menjou and Lewis Stone. The honors go to Menjou. When he shows diners to their tables he is a waiter escorting patrons of the restaurant; when Stone performs the same service he is a bank president out of his element. But perhaps he realized that he was being badly directed, and was being called upon to do things that he should not do. He is introduced in a sequence that goes to ridiculous excess in planting his wealth and fame as a maitre d' hotel, and when he reaches the restaurant over which he presides we see him performing duties that maitres d' hotel or headwaiters never perform. They do not show patrons to their tables. That is left to the captains. John Francis Dillon did not direct one restaurant scene in a convincing manner. To be consistent with the character given Stone the restaurant should have reflected the ultimate in service, wealth and dignity. Instead it is conducted like an ordinary roadhouse, with open drinking, cheek-to-cheek dancing and other lowbrowisms foreign to the atmosphere that the picture endeavors to create. None of the finesse of d'Arrast's direction of the restaurant scenes in Service for Ladies is apparent in the First National picture. One thing, though, for which Dillon is to be commended is his appreciation of the value of long shots in telling the story. Anyone with any picture sense knows that as much can be told with the full figures of the characters as with their faces, and when the full figures are used, more of the pictorial value of the scenes is retained. The reason that this obvious truth is not more in evidence on the screen is the lack of picture sense by those who make the pictures. No really intelligently made picture would have more than half a dozen close-ups in it. There are more than that in the Stone picture, but as most of them are used in scenes in which Ann Rork, daughter of the producer, appears, it would be unfair to charge them against Dillon. If Sam Rork intends to keep his daughter in pictures he should abandon this close-up habit before it jells. In a literary way this picture has as many faults as it has technically. When a young wife is torn out of the arms of a man she loves it is unreasonable to ask us to believe that she would not find some way of letting her husband know that a son had been born to him, or, at least, that one was on the way. When the husband followed his wife to America, where her family is a notable one, it seems unreasonable that he did not make enquiries about her that would have led him to discover the existence of a son. When he finds he has a son he indulges in no heroics when the young man, ignorant of the relationship, goes beyond his range of vision for the first few times after he makes the discovery. But when the son is out of trouble and is leaving New York for Boston, to marry the nice girl he loves, a girl who knows Stone is her fiance's father, he almost succumbs to his grief. The farewell is a most pathetic one on the part of the father. Why then and at no previous time? The whole idea of the closing scene is wrong.

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Stone should have been happy. And having the girl spot him as the boy's father is absurd as well as unnecessary. She had nothing to go on, and it looked to me like a deliberate attempt to fatten a part for the producer's daughter. But we can't blame Ann, who is quite a sweet looking youngster.

Lonesome Ladies is the product of an effort by First National to make a motion picture out of nothing except a cast. It can't be done. Lonesome Ladies proves it. It is composed entirely of trivialities, and the time spent in viewing it is a total loss, even though Anna Q. Nilsson, Jane Winton, Doris Lloyd, Fritzie Ridgeway, Lewis Stone, Edward Martindel and several others do their darnedest to make something of it. Joe Henabery directed it with all his might, but succeeded only in making it mildly irritatitng and yawnish. Among the small army of people given credit for being responsible for it appears the name of somebody as comedy constructionist, or something to that effect. It is the only amusing comedy in the film. Every time I see such credit on the screen I wonder afresh if the producers can realize how absurd it is and how ridiculous it makes both them and the production. It is their confession that they have a story so weak that they must employ some weird chap to make it so silly that the weakness won't be noticed. The screen should not advertise the fact that it has degenerated to a lowbrow imitation of art. Fortunately the comedy constructionist does no harm to Lonesome Ladies. The credit title is the only evidence that he was on the pay-roll. No picture can be greater than its principal motivating action. In this picture Miss Nilsson leaves her husband for a reason so trivial that her action is absurd, and a story built on an absurdity is in itself absurd. The only interesting feature of it is the wonder it causes over the fact that a producing organization can be so devoid of brains as to produce it. The titles were very good. They were written by Dwinelle Benthal and Rufus McCosh.

Just why Naughty, But Nice? There isn't a single thing about it that justifies its production. Within certain limits Colleen Moore is a clever little trouper. In this picture she does nothing that an extra girl could not do after five or six times before the camera. As always Colleen is surrounded with a capable cast, and the production is entirely satisfying, but where the story should be is a large void. It is just about the silliest drivel I ever saw masquerading as screen entertainment. Every situation in it is forced, and it has the fatal weakness of being based on a misunderstanding that never would have arisen if Colleen's characterization had been one of a girl with operating mental faculties. The love theme is developed by spontaneous combustion in the author's brain, not by a succession of scenes that make it plausible. All the comedy is borrowed from slapstick two-reelers. In the past I have praised Colleen's ability as a pantomimist. In this picture she indulges in some pantomime and I had no idea what she was driving at. The whole thing is a perfect example of what we may expect from the huddle system, by which the whole production staff has a hand in it. It even had a gag man, a terrible handicap to any picture. Colleen needs only a couple more pictures like Naughty, But Nice and her box office value will be as extinct as the dodo.



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Apparently the advertisements that the Runyadha people are running in The Spectator are attracting considerable attention. For the information of those who have made enquiries we might state that the advertisement in this issue is the third of a series that will continue for some time, and when they have been completed they will be published in a pamphlet. The interest that the advertisements have aroused would indicate that screen people have heard so much about economy of late that they are about ready to apply it to their personal affairs. Certainly it appears as if they have been paying a lot more than they should for their life insurance.

An article on how money is squandered in motion pictures, written by the editor of The Spectator, will appear in the September number of the American Mercury, on the newsstands August 25. The first of a series of articles on the same subject and by the same writer, will appear in the October number of Vanity Fair, on the newsstands September 20.

HARRY O. HOYT

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Yet these are the men into whose hands you commit the creation of an estate, running into hundreds of thousands of dollars, and it would be amusing were it not pathetic, to think of one gravely and solemnly discussiong questions, highly technical and involving large sums with another who yesterday might have been the local iceman, milkman, or the butcher's errand boy.

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Their success is therefore no evidence whatever of their knowledge of the business, and represents only their ability to sell the glowing promises which companies hold out, the analysis of which invariably causes the purchaser to laugh at his own simplicity and gullability.

No less absurd is the system so frequently employed, of referring these highly technical questions to a Manager whose knowledge is even more limited than that of "The Company Agent".

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PRODUCTION VALUES

By MARY O'HARA

AN pictures be made more cheaply without injuring their quality? If so, how? One way occurs to me. A personal anecdote will explain

I once turned in a story to a producer, treating a certain theme which had been decided on. The director was delighted with it, the producer equally so. Other opinions were taken and the verdict was that the story had unus-ual values of drama and entertainment. Finally the producer turned to me and with rather a shame-faced grin, said:
"There's only one thing the matter

with it. It doesn't cost enough money.

There was a chorus of boos at him, but he stuck to it. Sequences which were not in the least necessary must be introduced in order to give opportunity for more expensive sets,

I am sure all screen writers have had the same experience. "Production values", the producers call them, and demand that every script shall contain them.

This is not as insane as it sounds. The picture salesmen judge of the value of a picture by what it has cost, and they set its selling price at a suitable profit over its cost. If it cost little they can not ask so much for it, because the exhibitor, seeing a picture, can count up the approximate cost of sets, actors and props, and judge entirely by those visible, material values. He does not even consider the invisible, spiritual values of beauty, charm, vitality, interest and feeling. Working backwards from this, producers have fallen in line and have adopted the practice of making pictures cost more so that they can ask more for them.

It is easy to see how such a system of selling has grown up. It has always been safer to bet that a picture was going to be bad—namely, that it would have none of those "invisible values"—than that it would be good. So the idea of real merit was left out of the bargain from the beginning and the basis of payment was simply that of actual cost and reasonable profit. When such pictures as Over the Hill or The Miracle Man came along, pictures crammed full of "invisible values" but of moderate cost, they were considered exceptions and in no way altered the accepted methods of selling.

It appears that producers have now decided to make pictures cost less. If they really mean this - if they ask writers to prepare scripts which call for less lavishness and positively no unnecessary expense, they will get them. There is no difficulty about that; and by that one stroke alone picture costs can be greatly decreased. (I will not mention the saving by elimination of waste and inefficiency,

which is another subject altogether.)
But what now about "production values"? If the material and visible

values are not so overwhelmingly present, there must be the other, the învisible, spiritual values. In a word, if pictures are to be cheaper, they must be better. More than this, the exhibitor will have to pay for those invisible values just as he has always paid for the visible values. Among the many conferences being held at present, the producer should be having conferences with his salesmen and theatre owners, devising some plan of selling on merit instead of on actual cost. But to return to the important point, how can the producer be sure that he will have that merit to sell? I have a theory for achieving this with more certainty than heretofore.

My theory is that in the making of a picture, four different creative abilities are needed: that of writer, playwright, director, and photographic artist.

I say writer; meaning one who can describe human beings as they are, and who is prolific in the flow of ideas and the creation of plots, situations, characters, business, etc.

I say playwright. It is not generally considered necessary to have playwrights for the screen. This is an appalling error. It has cost the industry millions of dollars and is, I think, the one greatest single cause of bad pictures. A playwright knows that he has to get his stuff over within certain limits of time or footage and that if there are large deletions his picture or play suffers. The playwright does not begin a piece of work and find out in the middle of it that he has no story. He knows when he has a story to tell and how to tell it within limits. He knows what the point is, and he is aiming at that point from the very

He may not be very creative in the way that a brilliant writer is—he may not have an endless flow of ideas and inspirations, but he has the definite scientific knowledge which will enable him to take the material provided him by a book or play or by another writer and so arrange and construct and balance it as to get the greatest possible effectiveness within the prescribed limits. Writing a novel is creating without limits; therefore no playwright is needed. Writing a play or picture is creating within limits; therefore a playwright is essential.

To be a playwright one needs, to begin with, a certain type of mind—critical, analytical and patient; and one needs training, either from experience or association and study with other playwrights. Some of the most brilliant writers never could become playwrights. In fact, their very fluency, supplying them with an endless stream of material and urging them on to ever more and more creation, works against the achievement of balance, or the possibility of it. A

picture must have both a writer and a playwright, either in one person or

in two working together.

Most screen writers are not playwrights. Those who have the necessary qualifications of mind have not had the training. They have learned continuity-writing from studio experience and from meeting the demands of directors, producers and supervisors. But even if a continuity-writer were an accomplished playwright as well, producers and directors would for the most part not know the difference. They do not know that they need playwrights.

However, truth will out. Pictures need playwrights. Eventually this will be known and admitted. There will then be a demand for them, and those screen writers who have a natural bent that way will develop this ability and become playwrights. Those who have not should know that it is for them to create, but not to have the final say in construction, and should never work on a picture except in

collaboration with a playwright.
This function of playwright, requiring as it does, a rare type of mind, literary ability of a high order, exhaustive training, and a profound knowledge of human nature and life, is one which, at present, the executives of the industry attempt to fill. The results speak for themselves.

I say director; meaning one who is expert at handling actors, causing, them to express correctly the thoughts and feelings which are specified.

I say photographic artist. Beauty on the screen should be more highly valued and more sought after than it is. The Germans and Swedes in their high class pictures never miss it. It gives such a richness and polish and class to a production that even if the picture is otherwise without merit, one is still obliged to praise it; for genius, of a certain kind at least, has been shown forth. No picture should be without it. But unfortunately the majority of cameramen have not the understanding of light and composition which produces this beauty. They understand the mechanics and technique of their business, but are not artists and can not create real beauty.

There are, happily, some exceptions to this statement — some cameramen who are real artists and prove it by the beauty they achieve on the screen. But in cases where the cameraman lacks this ability, and the director also, there should be on the set when the picture is made, some man who is a photographic artist. I know of one case where a director asked an artist friend to work by his side on a picture and to supervise the lighting and composition. The result was a picture so beautiful that all the studio made pilgrimages to the projection-room to see it. It cost very little additional money to have that artist on the set.

There are many such artists in Hollywood, so many that it is a certainty that nothing but a lack of the realization of the need of their serv-

THE STORY OF THE BOX-OFFICE

(Continued from page 13)

ices on the part of producers and directors ever permits the making of a picture as uninteresting photographically as, let us say, Mr. Wu. It is evident that no expense was spared to get beauty in this picture. The sets were lavish and showed a world of care, but still there was no beauty. There couldn't be. Beauty doesn't exist in a picture by itself, or by luck, it has to be put there by an artist. There was not a photographic artist on the job.

These four then, writer, playwright, director and photographic artist. The playwright will do the cutting, either actually or in a supervisory capacity and the writer will do the titling. And it should be known of writers and directors, which of these gifts they have, and not taken for granted that they have them all; that because a man is a fine director, he is also a playwright and perhaps a photographic artist into the bargain. *

Let us suppose, for instance, that the producer has bought a book by Ibanez to screen. Ibanez is the writer. No other writer is needed. Material is there in plenty. All that is needed is a playwright to arrange and con-struct it. But the producer does not reason this way. He argues that this is going to be a big and important production and he must get a writer with a big and important name. He selects one. It is possible, of course, that this writer is also a playwright, in which case all will go well—that is, if the writer is allowed to do his work without interference.

But suppose that this writer is not a playwright at all? Inevitably his creative gift will oppose itself to the material Ibanez created, and instead of subordinating himself and arranging what is already there, he will give his inspiration free rein and will come near to writing a new story, which will then be just as much in need of the work of a playwright as the original novel was. How often has this happened? And an amazed public

wonders why.

Let us suppose an opposite case. A director goes to the producer with an "idea" which is promising. The producer looks around for a writer. In this case he must have a writer and a playwright. A playwright alone might not be sufficient-not creative enough. Equipped with both he is certain of achieving all the success which the original idea permits of. * *

This, then, is my theory: Four artists on every picture, possibly in two persons, or in three, but the abilities must be there; for it is these abilities which will put into the picture the invisible production values—the drawing, vital element which attracts the public and makes for financial success.

It is interesting to inspect some prominent personalities of the industry, analyzing their abilities according to this formula. At "Mr. Spectator's" request, I will do this in a subsequent issue.

ago, the pictures coming out of the Paramount studios were so very poor that even the Publix houses were turning them down. The Publix booking situation had even reached the point where Sam Katz told Zukor that he seriously was considering booking the M.-G.-M. product solid for the entire Publix chain.

Of course, when Schulberg took over the studio and partially reversed the tables by procuring some high class program pictures starring Beery and Hatton, Clara Bow, Bebe Daniels, Adolphe Menjou and other Paramount

stars, he saved the situation.

If Schulberg's road-shows, Old Ironsides and The Rough Riders, hadn't both flopped, the Paramount organization would be in a very healthy condition, despite the very high production costs on some of their program pictures. However, the gross receipts on Beau Geste and Wings will probably offset any loss of the two former road shows mentioned.

So, taking it all in all, Paramount is in a much better condition than it was at this time last year. The year 1926 was the first that the Famous Players' net was over five and one-quarter millions. They have sixty more Publix theatres than they had at this time last year, the biggest of which is doing a weekly average business of \$67,000, and the Paramount foreign sales have jumped about 40%

in the last eighteen months.

Since Jesse Lasky says we must economize and possibly cut down to two meals a day, we all begin to wonder just why. Perhaps it is because most of the Paramount flops, namely the W. C. Fields, Ed Wynn, and Junior Star pictures, are due directly to him

to him.

If Lasky would forget that Paramount has five hundred and sixty Publix theatres in the United States, one hundred and nine theatres in the Canadian Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, and a third interest in Ufa's two hundred and forty theatres—thus assuring him of his production cost before a picture is even started, no matter how poor it may be-he would undoubtedly strive to turn out fewer and better box-office pictures as Paramount used to do in the old days before it had the theatre monopoly.

DIRECTORS

Considering the fact that approximately 70% capacity business is the flop-line in the average motion pic-ture theatre, I have rated all directors whose releases over the past eighteen months have averaged 70% or better. This same applies to the writers' list.

An asterisk (*) after the director's name in question means that either his last release or his current production shows signs of improving; while a minus sign (—) means that he is at present on the decline.

The directors who seem to be climb-

ing most rapidly lately are, Clarence Brown, Clarence Badger, Mauritz Stiller, Frank Borzage, Luther Reed, Will Nigh, Edwin Carewe and Ed Sedgwick.

Clarence Brown's rise to the third most consistent box-office director in the industry has been remarkable indeed. Because of his contract expiring with M.-G.-M., the eyes of the industry are on him, and it is quite probable that he will go over to his logical place with United Artists.

Clarence Badger, although an oldtime director, has only recently climbed to the high rank he now holds, which he has attained by directing the most successful pictures that both Clara Bow and Bebe Daniels have ever

appeared in.

Mauritz Stiller's great success on his first effort for Famous Players, Hotel Imperial, has been quite a surprise to all concerned. He is one of the few directors who was a complete failure under Irving Thalberg's supervision, who had him withdrawn from The Temptress after that picture was four weeks in production, and yet made good under the Ben Schulberg regime.

I have already commented on Frank Borzage's success with Seventh Heaven, and only hope that he is able to get another story as entertaining as this one.

Luther Reed's success, like that of Roland West, Howard Hawks, Monta Bell, Monte Price and a lot of other former scenarists, goes to prove that one of the best places to draw directors from is within the ranks of the scenario writers. Reed, for seven years a prominent screen writer, has

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been especially successful in his direction of several of the Menjou and

Vidor starring vehicles.

Will Nigh, who made a poor start with M.-G.-M. by directing the Fire Brigade, which, although a very fine picture, was not a financial success, has reversed his luck at the box-office with Mr. Wu. With the exception of Tell It to the Marines, Mr. Wu has been Lon Chaney's most successful picture of the year. Accordingly, Nigh is to be entrusted with the direction of another M.-G.-M. special, Rose Marie, which I hope M.-G.-M. will carry out their original intention of filming in Technicolor. Much credit for the success of Doug Fairbanks' Black Pirate was owing to the beautiful natural color photography by Henry Sharp, who, by the way, is now under contract to M.-G.-M.

Eddie Carewe's big box-office hit,

Eddie Carewe's big box-office hit, Resurrection, has been quite a revelation to the producers, and especially to First National. The last two pictures that Carewe produced and released through First National barely clicked at the box-office. In fact, it is doubtful whether they will do much more than pay for themselves, if they

do that much.

Resurrection has won for Carewe a new reputation as a box-office director, and accordingly he has been handed a new contract by United Artists, for whom he will shortly produce Ramona, starring his very successful protege, Dolores Del Rio.

STARS

In gazing over the star rating list, one will observe that there are only three stars who are universally a 100% draw, and that these three, Chaplin, Fairbanks and Lloyd, have all held their top positions for many years.

When Valentino passed away, his box-office draw was around 88% and was climbing gradually toward the 100% line. Upon his death, his draw jumped to 96% almost over night, which resulted in the re-issuing of

several of his former pictures.

Undoubtedly one of the newest and most sensational box-office attractions on the star list is Greta Garbo, who, although practically unknown a year ago, has jumped up to the ninth position as a box-office draw. This is the first time in the history of motion pictures that a star has been developed so rapidly and with only three releases.

Much credit for her rapid rise should go not only to the Metro-Goldwyn studios intact, but also to Howard Deitz and Pete Smith, Eastern and Western publicity directors respectively for M.-G.-M., who have certainly helped to make the company they are working for foremost as big star-makers. Possibly that is why Marcus Loew and Louis B. Mayer are paying these two exploiteers bigger salaries than they are to some of their directors. Evidently publicity is still the life-blood of the motion picture industry.

However, since most of us know

who the big box-office stars are and not so much about the small ones, the bottom end of this list is much more interesting. Three producers, P. D. C., Warners and Universal, all have several star names near the bottom of this list, which is only natural, since they are weaker releases as compared to the big three, and are naturally trying to create new stars.

FEATURED PLAYERS

This list of featured players includes all contract—or free-lance—artists whose box-office draws have been averaging 60% or over. This list should prove valuable to anyone interested in pictures, as the future stars of the industry will be drawn from those who rate highest on this list and continue to do so over a series of their releases.

Antonio Moreno, who recently returned from abroad where he appeared in Madame Pompadour for British National Pictures, heads the list and seems to be the next possible candidate for stardom. Since Tony has been back home for over a month and as yet has signed no contract, I was under the impression that he was holding out for a big salary. But I have just been informed, though unofficially, that the famous Mr. Moreno has decided that he wants to become a director. Maybe Tony thinks that he can improve the recent general depression in the studios by directing a picture or two. Yet, since he is so popular at the box-office right now, I would advise him to stick to the grease-paint angle.

Jack Mulhall, Joan Crawford and Lois Moran are among the most rapid climbers of the established featured

players.

Mulhall has three more co-starring pictures to make with Dorothy Mackaill and then is to be starred by First

National.

Joan Crawford, although listed as an M.-G.-M. featured player, was practically starred in her two last releases, The Taxi Dancer and The Understanding Heart, both of which stood up remarkably well at the boxoffice considering there was no special merit to either production. Since she is Harry Rapf's protege, we hear that he has big plans for her and will star her ere long.

Lois Moran, who was the sensation of 1926, as the little daughter in Stella Dallas, has certainly made good in every sense of the word. Although a free-lance player for the past four-teen months, she has just been signed

up by Winnie Sheehan on a five-year starring contract for Fox.

Needless to say, when Seventh Heaven is released generally, Janety Gaynor and Charlie Farrell will shoot right up on the featured players' list, and I would not be at all surprised to see them both jump over to the star rating list, next year.

SLAMMING THE STARS

Besides making motion picture producers ridiculous, the only other result that the recent abortive attempt to reduce salaries has accomplished was to stir the newspapers of the country to make unkind references to the stars. The papers, with extraordinary unanimity, have ignored the fact that the cut was to affect all classes of picture people, and have directed their caustic remarks at the players only. But the stars bowed as low as all the rest of them at the Biltmore banquet.

KARLE KARPE

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VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

LEGAL CONTROVERSY

Dear Mr. Beaton: In The Spectator of July 23, under the heading "What You Should Know About the Law", Attorney Roger Marchetti makes a statement that requires some elucidation. In the second paragraph he states:

paragraph he states:

"It was charged by Joseph Grubb Alexander, Ernest R. Schayer, and Wilfrid North, complainants, that Sidney Howard had plagiarized Miss Lyons's (deceased) plot, The Full of the Moon, in his play, They Knew What They Wanted."

I should like to know this much about the law: Why should Alexander, Schayer and North bring suit against

Schayer and North bring suit against Howard for plagiarizing someone else's plot? Miss Lyons (deceased) had been a play reader, I understood, for the New York Theatre Guild, and before her decease denied ever having seen the play entitled The Full of the

Judge Augustus N. Hand, having read both plays, stated that "the two plays were similar, but the incidents

not so uncommon as to give rise to ny suspicion of a steal". As a matter of fact, the incident on which the plot of The Full of the Moon is based is so unusual that when a scenario writer from Hollywood saw Howard's play in New York she came ack West and said to the complain-ants, "I have seen your play." Any scenario writer knows how sim-

ple it is to dress the characters in different costumes, give them different names and foreign environment, and defy an author to recognize his own child; but given a situation unique and basic the transformation becomes evident. This is one thing a judge in New York, well versed in law, might learn from Hollywood writers well versed in story.

What is the use of copyright law unless one's work is to be protected? The Full of the Moon was copyrighted one year before Howard's play was

produced.

For a small sum of money a transcript of any play in the Congressional Library can be obtained and any unprincipled person can re-habilitate an idea and sell it as his own, unless the copyright law is upheld by the courts. That's something else

I should like to know about the law.

But don't let any of your readers imagine from the article published on July 23 that the compainants used Miss Lyons's (deceased) plot. That plot was ours, every word written in Hollywood, and copyrighted in good

WILFRID NORTH.

A COMPARISON

Dear Editor:

I notice in The Film Spectator of July 23 your article headed "Colman Great in Magic Flame."

Did you see The Night of Love, with Colman and Vilma Banky? If

so, you will remember that she jumps through a large window to the sea as did Colman in Magic Flame. The picture, to my mind, could be im-proved if the prince could die some other way, as the two pictures are too nearly alike to follow each other so closely. Also, if the circus clown allowed himself to take the place of a prince, don't you think it is a bit late for him to try to run away after being denounced by a woman as an impostor, inasmuch as she has been convinced that it is her mistake? Possibly those few scenes where he runs across the lawn to the gate could be left out with advantage. Both stars, however, did very good work in the picture, the fault being in the scenario.

H. G. BENNETT.

MESSAGE WEAKENED

Dear Mr. Beaton:

In the current number of the Film Mercury is an article on the Scenario, by Jas. P. Calhoun, in which he places Barbed Wire among the scenario tri-

I take issue with this statement, primarily on the grounds that the story is in no sense screen material. The apparent theme is the hatred of Mona and her compatriots for the Boche, and its ultimate conquest. The theme, as carried out, leads to nothing more than purely mental action, and the only demonstration of this seems to be nothing more than Mona's stolid refusal to smile at the antics of the German buffoon. That she falls in love with a Boche does not mean that she extends that love to his fellows, but confines it to that individual Boche. So far the theme falls flat. We are not clearly shown that she defends the Boche when he is found guilty unjustly—which latter, by the way, deprives the situation of a lot of its drama. But we can see that her defense of him is the result of a predeliction in his favor.

The "comic relief", though out of place in pictures of this type, is nevertheless legitimate in this case, as it tends to work out the theme. But why, in God's name, is it necessary to inject slapstick by running the man through the threshing machine? This has not even the excuse

of legitimacy, as Mona is off stage when it happens.

And finally, what excuse can you find for the climax? The only lesson the movies can teach us is an object lesson, which does not consist in the screening of a dozen preachy titles which fail to leave us convinced that the French people are ready to open their arms to their enemy.

That this climax follows the story is no reason to retain it, for it is

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MANGANING TANAHAN KANAMAN KANAMAN KEBUAN

weak enough to damn a much better picture than Barbed Wire, which I consider just an average movie, and certainly not worth the lavish encomiums it has received.

Neither do I think that Pola Negri is congenially cast; though, like the finished artiste she is, she is perfectly adequate. Repression is not her forte, as a study of all her most successful pictures — Passion, One Arabian Night, and Carmen, especially the lat-

ter-will prove.

To me, Hotel Imperial and Forbidden Paradise are the only two American pictures in which she has appeared at her best.

Suppose they had wound up the Barbed Wire picture by showing the brother led back by a German woman who had nursed and then married him we would, at least, have had an object lesson with which to climax the story. Of course, these are merely my own conclusions drawn from the picture, and I give them for what they are worth. The picture is an ambitious endeavor and therefore invites criti-

F. ELY PAGET.

WRITTEN FOR THE SCREEN

Dear Mr. Beaton:

In your issue of The Spectator of July 23 you took occasion to speak meritoriously of The Other Side, a small, independent shoe-string produc-tion, as in comparison to When a Man Loves, a Warner Bros. super-special.

You must know the value of a word of praise from yourself to the small strivers, and I, therefore, feel sure that you will give heed to the plaint of

a team of plodding free lance writers
—Marion Ward and May McLean.
The Other Side is an original story
written directly for the screen, and
the script was shot as written. Ask
Ernie Van Pelt—he knows.

We turned out the original story and continuity in less than a week—four days and nights, to be exact. Which shows that those who write for the small independents have to "step

on it" a bit.

And even at that we find spare moments in which to bombard busy editors with bum verse—a sin I promise never again to commit if you will only give us credit for The Other Side. Thanking you for past courtesies,

MAY McLEAN.

SPECTATOR'S POET

The Film Spectator is proud of its poet, George F. Magoffin. Every week for a long time I have looked on the poetry page of the Literary Digest expecting to find one of his clever contributions reproduced. I was rewarded in the issue of the Digest of July 30. His "Well! Well!" was given national recognition—the one beginning, "Did you ever feel an impulse in your heart, dear, to hit a movie actor in the eye?" In spite of its somewhat facetious beginning, it is a thoughtful protest against so much typical movie stuff in pictures.

NOTHING TO STOP THEM

However, if Jesse Lasky and Louis B. Mayer are at all put out over the failure of the salary cut to click, there is nothing in the world to prevent them from carrying out their expressed intentions of cutting their

TRIBUTE TO HOSPITALITY

Carl Van Vechten, the well known novelist, says in a recent Vanity Fair that after dining with the Laskys he drove to the opening of Old Ironsides through two miles of streets that were lined ten-deep on both sides with people who cheered Mary Pickford. If I knew just where I stood with Jesse I'd ask him to give me the telephone number of his bootlegger.

AN AWFUL THREAT

According to The Daily Film Renter of London, Carl Laemmle has decided to make in Europe a picture with an all-royal cast, every member of it to be someone with a genuine title. Why go to such extreme lengths? Aren't pictures bad enough now? My only hope is that he engages Von Stroheim to direct it. That would save us from the necessity of viewing it for at least a couple of years.

SPECTATOR'S HALL OF FAME

On the walls of the room in which I think out things that I write for The Spectator hang framed, autographed photographs of those whose performances on the screen I like and whom I am happy to number among my friends. There recently has come to dwell among them one which draws my gaze most often. In a silvered frame there is a face, a beautiful one, that reflects both wistfulness and content, spirituality with a suggestion of humor, sweet girlishness mixed with the poise of maturity. In the corner is written in a hand that is sure of itself, this inscription: "To Welford Beaton, whose review of Seventh Heaven has created yet another Paradise for little Diane. Sincerely, Janet Gaynor." Ever since it has been hanging in its place I have been endeavoring to sum up enough modesty to keep me from telling you about it.

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The Film Spectator now is eight pages larger than it was when it was first offered to the public.

It is going to be made larger still. It is going to add features that will necessitate an increase in size.

With the last issue it inaugurates a department that will be of incalculable value to the motion picture industry—The Story of the Box Office, told in every issue by the figures compiled by Norman Webb.

To meet the growing expenses we are forced to ask our readers for a little more money. We are adding \$1.50 to our subscription price, bringing it up to

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The increase will go into effect in the United States on September 1st, and to allow our readers in Canada, England, France, and Germany full time to renew before the advance, the foreign rate will be increased on October 1st.

Until the dates specified we will accept renewals and new subscriptions at the present price, \$3.50 domestic, and \$4.50 foreign.

You may renew for as many years as you like, irrespective of when your present subscription expires. Jean Hersholt has renewed for ten years.

After September 1st the Newsstand Price will be 20c the copy

THE FILM SPECTATOR

7213 Sunset Boulevard

Hollywood, California

Phone HEmpstead 2801

LETTER TO ROOSEVELT HOTEL

By SID GRAUMAN

GRAUMAN'S CHINESE

6925 HOLLY WOOD BLVD. . V . HOLLY WOOD, CALIFORNIA

August 11, 1927.

Mr. Hugh A. Beaton, Jr., President and Managing Director, Roosevelt Hotel Company, Hollywood Professional Building, Hollywood, California.

Dear Mr. Beaton:

I have just returned to Grauman's Chinese Theatre from a tour of inspection of the new, magnificent Roosevelt Hotel and to say that I am pleased with Hollywood's latest, splendid hotel structure is putting it mildly.

I believe it will fill a long felt want in Hollywood for a truly metropolitan hotel, of the calibre of the bigger and finer New York hostelries.

In addition to it being an ideal stopping place for the thousands of tourists visiting Southern California yearly I know scores of prominent celebrities of the motion picture world will want to maintain permanent apartments in your institution.

I am sure it will be a hotel of which not alone Hollywood, but all of California and the entire west can well be proud, and an architectural triumph that will be famed throughout the civilized world.

In looking over the artistic furnishings and charming decorations I know that no expense or pains is being spared to make it a high class, distinctive institution, with every modern comfort and luxury the mind of man can conceive.

That it will be maintained on a plane to satisfy the most fastidious and exacting under your capable direction, I feel sure, from the success you have made of similar institutions in the past.

Please accept my heartiest congratulations and sincerest wishes for the new Roosevelt Hotel, as well as my thanks as a Hollywood booster, for what I believe will mark a great step in advance in the business and social life of the world's film capital.

Sincerely yours,

Sed Fraum any

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Edited by WELFORD BEATON

THE 20 FILM SPECTATOR

Published In Hollywood Every Other Saturday

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No. 1

IN THIS NUMBER

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Second Article on Production Values by Mary O'Hara

Story of the Box-Office

The Great Hollywood Myth

METROPOLIS

GENTLEMAN OF PARIS

THIRTEENTH JUROR

BUCK PRIVATES

DROP KICK

HEART OF THE YUKON

HE'S MY DADDY

TWELVE MILES OUT

A LETTER TO MR. MAYER

TRINITY 1173

Western Ostume Ompany

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Los Angeles

August 25, 1927

Mr. Louis B. Mayer, Culver City, California.

Dear Mr. Mayer:

At some time or other in the life of a studio, there arises what appears to be a passion to get into the costume business. We're in it, and would like to tell you about it.

Our present stock of merchandise has cost us, according to our inventory, \$3,563,833.25 and our records show that this merchandise works on an average of once every three years per piece. Also it costs us \$80,000.00 per month to maintain this stock in usual condition.

Every time we make an article to order for you, and rent it to you, our records show that we invest approximately forty per-cent of the cost in problematic future rentals. However, when we can utilize the merchandise that is hanging on our racks we can show a profit of approximately twenty per-cent. We also want you to realize that made to order costumes cost you about five times the rental that merchandise out of stock, altered to fit, would total.

What applies to our business would, more or less, apply to your costume department as you develop it, leaving a fixed overhead, investment, etc. While you are building new merchandise you are duplicating, in a great many instances, what is already in existence, thereby taxing the individual picture with a cost considerably in excess of the expenditure necessary. The entire picture industry, working upon the same principle, would rapidly build an enormous and superfluous wardrobe.

Yours sincerely,

WESTERN COSTUME COMPANY,

President.

LLB. VMS.

THE FILM SPECTATOR

EVERY OTHER SATURDAY

Published by

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The only publication conducted solely for those who THINK about motion pictures.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, SEPT. 3, 1927

LISTEN!

Just what The Spectator must do to make its readers understand its tables of box-office ratings, I don't know. I thought that between us Norman Webb and I had made everything plain, but I have been the recipient of many letters, telegrams and phone calls protesting against The Spectator rating this actor over another, and placing one director before another. A typical protest, contained in a friendly and pleasant letter from Earl Wingart, director of publicity, F. B. O. studios, is as follows "We all think that Bill Le Baron is the greatest producer in the business, and naturally we feel a little bit hurt when someone else is given a higher rating than he." Because it is hot and because I want to return to the back yard where I'm getting the feel of my new fishing rod, very nearly catching a kitten in one cast, I'll agree with any proposition that Wingart advances, and rather than provoke an argument I will confess to double the admiration that he has for Bill. But neither The Spectator, Norman Webb nor I had anything to do with Le Baron's place on the ratings list. Pictures made by other supervisors took in more money at the box-office than pictures made by Le Baron; our ratings are established by box-office returns, and that is all there is to it. This goes for witers, directors, and actors also. The box-office ratings are facts, not opinions, and The Spectator has no control over them.

In Which We State We're Going to Loaf

SOMEWHERE there's a stream that I want to sit beside with Mrs. Spectator and Virgil, our dog. A road climbs a solitude to reach it, and along its course friendly messages are heliographed by leaves as they fall through filtered sunshine. There is quiet up there, the quiet of wood noises made by old trees as their joints crack, and by young ones as they tremble with youthful joy of being young and supple; the noises of wild things that voice their lack of confidence in man; the songs of birds by day, and at night the question the owl asks above the chorus of the crickets—all the noises that make the great silence that is balm to man when he needs it. I don't know where the place is, but I'm going to head

my car towards it and feel the content of the discoverer's anticipation. Twenty months of writing one thousand words a day, five of those months under the strain of the serious illness of my boy, whose chum I am, has tired me somewhat, and I can not do The Spectator justice when I am tired. So I'm going away to do nothing strenuously, and if I find an old dog beside a road I'll stop my car and get out and sit beside him as I smoke a pipe and scratch him behind the ears. I'll keep heading north until I come to a place where there are endless forests of green trees, and rushing streams with trout in them, and lakes with bass. And if some day I'm fishing and a man comes along and asks me what I think of motion pictures, I'll put down my rod and take him by the throat; and my thumbs will compress his windpipe, and I'll squeeze until the look of fear in his bulging eyes is succeeded by the glaze of unconsciousness, and I'll keep on squeezing until he breathes no more. Then I'll let his limp form sink to the rock, and roll off into the stream, and he'll be carried away while I refill my pipe and resume my fishing. And while I'm away the next Spectator will come to you. I'll have nothing to do with it. Some of its friends will see to it that there is no lack of reading matter. It is to be a contributors' number, which I hope will become a yearly habit. Its pages are open to all those who wish to write for it. They may slam me or one another to their hearts' content. It will be a worth-while number, for several noted writers have signified their intention of writing things that they have been waiting for me to write. I think I'll be back in time to rescue a second Spectator from their clutches, but I can't promise. There may be too many fish to catch and too many people to kill.

TRAGEDY

I met her walking down the street—
A form so trim, a face so sweet—
I cast my heart beneath her feet—
A courteous gesture ever.

She glanced at me with smile demure— Those limpid eyes, so warm, so pure! And such the power of their allure I could do naught but follow.

Ah, sad the day my vagrant heart,
Received that wound from Cupid's dart,
For peace and I must be apart
Forever and forever!

She owns a chauffeur and a car, A villa in the Place del Mar— She is a famous movie star— As wealthy as she's clever.

My meagre wardrobe's almost bare—
I own this suit, an extra pair
Of trousers, much the worse for wear—
Never—ah, no—never!

O, Fate plays many a sorry jest
With hearts that ill can stand the test
Of hope deferred—and all the rest—
Forever and forever!

I long to ride in Phoebe's car; I can but worship from afar— Ah, lonesome he who loves a star— Forever and forever!

-GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN.

Hard to Get Them to Believe the Truth

NE difficulty a writer has is in so treating picture production that people outside Hollywood will believe what he writes. Recently I forwarded to Vanity Fair the first of what was to be a series of six articles on any phase of the screen industry that I cared to deal with. I told merely the truth about the manner in which production is mismanaged, but I managed to scare the legal department of Vanity Fair. I received from its attorney a list of questions and demands that would have taken a month to answer. What proof did I have of my statement that Metro wasted half a million dollars in trying to make a picture out of Mysterious Island? was one of the hundred or more questions. The publication simply would not believe the truth, and rather than go to the trouble of satisfying it, I withdrew the article. Among the great newspapers of the world is the Manchester (England) Guardian. It is conservative, safe, sane and sound. It very sensibly concludes that motion pictures themselves bear testimony to the truth of what I write. In a recent issue the Guardian commented as follows under the heading, "Gross Incompetence": "The Film Spectator, an independently minded journal published in Hollywood, California, has just revealed the astonishing fact that last year's dividend on all the capital invested in American moving pictures was just 1.9 per cent. In spite of their enormous markets at home and abroad, in spite of the almost hysterical enthusiasm of the public, in spite of the real talent gathered about the studios of Hollywood and of Long Island, the stockholders in one of the largest American industries are getting less than 2 per cent. for their money. The writer goes on to explain how this happens. He draws a picture, almost unbelievable if we had not seen some of the consequences, of the stupidity, indifference, and gross incompetence which infest the studios. 'None of the big producing organizations,' he says, 'is conducted in a manner that suggests business sanity.' A producer planning a picture has no idea what length his script calls for. Pleading that 'the cheapest thing of the lot is film', he shoots five times as much as he needs and takes out the superfluous four-fifths in the cutting-room. 'It is not just film that lies on the floor; it is a fortune spent on sets, salaries, and lights. . . . Von Stroheim shoots anywhere from twenty to thirty feet for every one that he can use, and we rate him as one of our greatest directors.' Metro-Goldwyn began work on a film called The Mysterious Island, spent half a million dollars, and abandoned it because the story was not good enough. They made another picture which was so bad that they shelved it and even sold the producing rights to another company. The men at the head of these great corporations get enormous salaries for this mismanagement. Now they have fallen back on the usual resort of incompetent capitalists-they are demanding wage-cuts, not only in the extravagant salaries of the stars, but in the humbler wages of the average actor. And we see the ludicrous results of the insane policy in every picturehouse. One would rest unperturbed by the state of Hollywood if one were not afraid of similar developments in England. British pictures have, as yet, little money to play with; they can not afford costly folly. But they are promised a sheltered market, and there is already a dangerous tendency toward the wild disorganization of America. A gross instance in point came to our knowledge only a few months ago. Needless to say, that kind of thing is not going to produce good pictures, and it is not going to do good business. There is, in fact, much to be said for the view that the artistic emancipation of films is waiting for their economic reformation; you can't put up a good building on a crazy foundation. We trust that British producers will not use the protection of the quota to develop the intellectual dropsy of their American colleagues. If they do, the Film Bill will have been a labor accomplished in vain."

"Metropolis" Is Notable Picture

NLY those who view with pessimism the fate of the human race can derive satisfaction from Metropolis as a piece of fiction, but those who are pessimistic regarding the development of the screen must become optimists when they view it. It is an extraordinary motion picture, in some ways quite the most extraordinary ever made. One must admire the minds that conceived it and brought it into being. Eric Pommer, the supervisor, and Fritz Lang, the director, are raised to a new dignity in screen art by this production, the former for the magnitude of his conception, the latter for the greatness of his screen interpretation of the conception. It was a brave thing to undertake for it was an adventure into a realm of fiction that it is hazardous to exploit. I have my own ideas regarding the trend of civilization and the state it will have reached when our great-great-grandchildren are adults. You also have your opinion. No doubt it differs from mine. Eric Pommer has his, and it may differ from both yours and mine. He puts his in a picture and asks you and me to accept it. I, for one, will do no such thing. I refuse to believe that a century hence workingmen will be slaves who live underground. If Pommer wished to produce a story laid in a mythical country, and showed me bullfrogs driving rabbits tandem, I would not quarrel with him, for it is his own mythical country and I must accept all that his brain peoples it with; but when he says "this is what your descendants will be doing one or two hundred years hence," I refuse to follow him, for definite knowledge on the matter being unobtainable, I do not see why I should dismiss my own opinion and accept his. The whole trend of civilization is in a direction opposite to that which Metropolis takes, which makes the picture none the less entertaining, for at least it stimulates discussion. I do not believe that we ever will advance to a time when capital concerns itself with laborers as individuals whose bodily comforts and domestic welfare are of major importance to it from a sociological standpoint; but I do not believe for a moment that it will forget that it can realize upon its investment in labor only in the degree that the laborer is efficient. In Metropolis we have laborers reduced to their lowest point of efficiency. The improvement in transportation makes reasonable the prediction that in another century or so men can live hundreds of miles from the scenes of their daily occupations. This will tend to spread the population over great areas and give each man his quota of sunshine and garden. Metropolis assumes that civilization will burrow below the surface of the earth and that men will become clammy things with colorless skins and white eyes. It assumes also that men will work long hours, in spite of the fact

that the tendency towards shorter hours is marked. None of the things that Metropolis says time will do to society seem reasonable to me. Capital never will make slaves of workingmen because it is not good business so to do. For all these reasons I could derive no satisfaction from follwing the story of the picture. But as a picture I found it fascinating. Let us consider it purely as a picture and not as a piece of literature.

Production Weak in Human Qualities

ETROPOLIS was made to be released in twelve reels. Such was the footage in which the whole story was told. All the intimate phases of the story, the development of the love of the boy for the girl, the views of the home life, and the social existence of the characters, were sacrificed to production when five reels were eliminated from the original film to bring it down to the standard seven-reel feature length. I believe the American version would have been a much better picture if the human element had not been reduced so greatly. When Channing Pollock revised the film to make it fit our conditions-a job that brought him twenty thousand dollars and his name in gigantic letters on the screenno doubt he was persuaded by Paramount's salesmen that production value was what the public craved, consequently he eliminated everything that would have given the story any plausibility. Lang's direction reveals more aptitude for movement than for acting. All his mass shots and those in which the machinery was featured were handled in a manner that shows that Lang is a master in the treatment of such subjects, but when he directed his actors he was not so much at home. The father gives a convincing performance, in a quiet, repressed way that made the portrayal a powerful one. The son overacts all the way through, and gives a performance that entirely lacks conviction. Apparently the director allowed his actors to give their individual conceptions of the characters, without regard for their relation one to another. Metropolis is rather an argument for dual direction. If Lang's efforts with the material aspects of the production had been supplemented with a Lubitsch's skill at making the characters human we would have had a better picture, although the story militates against it being a perfect one. When Ufa made Metropolis it did not arbitrarily place its time one thousand years hence. As I understand it, Eric Pommer's idea was to depict life one or two centuries hence. Paramount's press agents, with their usual flair for exaggeration, made it ten centuries, thereby preparing the public for something more weird than it received. Technically the picture is a revelation of what can be done with models and a camera. The scenes of city life, airplanes passing among buildings, taxicabs dashing along elevated streets, pedestrians moving along sidewalks, were done so realistically that they must astonish anyone who is not familiar with the manner in which such things are done. It will interest Hollywood to know that these scenes were shot as we shoot our cartoon comedies: cardboard cut-outs being advanced after each shot. It cost less to shoot the scenes by this method than it would have to have used moving models, even though it took no less than nine months to complete them. The most striking shots in the picture were those showing the illuminated rings passing up and down around the dummy to which the face and

form of the girl were being transferred. I have no idea how it was done. Another effective shot was that showing several columns of people converging on the tower of Babel. It gives the impression that many thousands of people were used. If you looked closely, however, you could detect evidences of it being a divided shot, or whatever it is called—the same bunch of people being shot half a dozen times. No matter what degree of entertainment you derive from Metropolis you must give it credit for being a great intellectual feat as well as an example of the extraordinary possibilities of the screen. It is to be hoped that some day Eric Pommer will find himself so situated in Hollywood that he can attempt something else equally daring and ambitious.

Adolphe Menjou as "Gentleman of Paris"

DOLPHE MENJOU seems to have found his director. He has made another picture under the direction of H. D'Abbadie D'Arrast, who directed Service for Ladies. This time it is A Gentleman of Paris, and it is the best thing that has come from the Paramount studios since Beau Geste, although no two pictures could be farther apart in theme, locale and treatment. Menjou gives what I think will be regarded as the best performance of his career. He is again the sophisticated rounder of A Woman of Paris, and is given greater heights to achieve than the Chaplin picture afforded him. He has many moods in his new picture, all variations of one mood-his playfully cynical outlook on life-but none the less well defined on that account. Menjou is essentially an actor who responds to intelligent direction, and in D'Arrast's hands he had it. Although it is only his second picture, D'Arrast directs with the sureness of a veteran. He makes a Parisian drawing-room convincing, and we have precious few directors who can do that. The high point of the picture is reached when Adolphe apparently is detected cheating at cards at a party given in the home of his prospective father-in-law. In surroundings of the sort there is as much drama in such a denouement as there is in a murder, and D'Arrast builds the drama admirably. The guests are cast splendidly, a convincing bit being the presence of two boys, apparently young brothers of Adolphe's fiancee, who say their good nights and leave the drawing-room a couple of minutes after they enter it from the dining-room. The presence of the boys establishes the gathering as a family party. When the stakes for which Menjou and William Davidson are playing become high enough to excite the guests, the excitement is registered in a manner that indicates masterly direction. It is well bred and placid, but through it all there is an evidence of tenseness that I never before saw achieved on the screen with such good taste. Good taste, in fact, is the chief feature of D'Arrast's direction. When the game becomes exciting the guests cluster around the table until the two players are hidden completely. D'Arrast does not cleave a lane through them in order that the camera can pick up the leading characters. He moves to a close-up to reveal them, having one side of his group as the background for the shot, which is precisely the way in which such a scene should be presented. When Menjou is branded as a cheat the editing is faulty. It is the only part of the picture with which I quarrel. The sympathy is with Menjou, as the audience is confident that he is innocent, consequently there is drama

in the action of the guests in spurning him. This action is presented entirely in close-ups, exactly the wrong way to present it. It is the mass treatment of Menjou, not the individual treatment, that makes him a pathetic figure; it is the action of a woman turning her back on him, not her facial expression when doing it, that lends strength to the scene. Menjou's reaction is shown in close-ups also. They are entirely unnecessary, for we know him by that time, and are aware what mental suffering must be his, and it would be much stronger to have left to our imaginations the working of his mind. The scene in its entirety should be presented in a long shot showing the guests ignoring him; and the failure to pick him out in close-ups would have added a further note of pathos to it by bringing out the idea that even the camera had deserted him. The actions of the guests showed that they considered that he had no place in such a gathering, and the camera should have been used to heighten such an impression. It is a fine point, perhaps, but the cinematic art has advanced roughshod as far as it can, and in its future strides it must pay more attention to its footgear than it has been doing. It is a pity that such a splendid picture as this one must resort to the close-up evil in a place where it can do so much harm.

Fine Performances and Fine Direction

GENTLEMAN of Paris is Paramount's success with a story out of which Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer made such a woeful failure. Metro produced it as A Certain Young Man, basing it on Bellamy the Magnificent, but made such a bad picture out of it that it was not released. Paramount bought it for seventy-five thousand dollars, the value it attached to one situation, that of the master being detected in having an affair with his valet's wife. A Gentleman of Paris will be so successful that it will look as if the price were not exorbitant, but it will be the fine acting and the fine direction that will make it a success, not the strength of the situation that cost so much money. I'll confess that I went with some trepidation to view the picture, for I had a feeling that it was juggling with my reputation. I had seen Nicholas Soussanin do small parts in two pictures, and although that was the sole extent of my acquaintance with him, I recorded in The Spectator my opinion that he was a sterling actor. I received later a letter from D'Arrast stating that on the strength of my estimate of Soussanin he was to have a big part in the Menjou picture. I am quite grateful to the actor. Next to Menjou's acting and the direction, his performance is the big feature of the production. He is one of the little group of splendid artists who have come to us from Russia. This picture should bring him well to the front. In A Gentleman of Paris we have Lawrence Grant, the king in Service for Ladies. Here is another sterling actor, a finished artist who can add strength to the strongest cast. Bill Davidson comes to the bat in this picture as a sophisticated man of the world who can wear good clothes and conduct himself as if they were made for him. He is easy and natural, and adds considerably to the wealth of good acting that characterizes the production. Shirley O'Hara is the sweetheart. She is new to me, but I will watch her hereafter, as I believe she has something that will get her somewhere. Her presence in the picture was another exhibition of wise casting. She is a sweet,

unsophisticated youngster, in strong contrast to the sophisticated types with which Menjou had his affairs. The obvious innocence of Shirley gives point to Menjou's anxiety that she should be kept in ignorance of his gay ways. Ivy Harris and Arlette Marchal have small parts and enact them capably. The titles are well written and except for three or four lapses, are examples of how perfect punctuation should be presented on the screen. The person who punctuated them should perform a like service for all Paramount titles, and if he has any spare time Paramount might lend him to Universal. The story of A Gentleman of Paris is not noted for its progression from one exciting situation to another. It takes two or three days out of the life of a gay blade and shows us what happens to him. The love story is ready-made, the opening shot being an insert of a telegram which tells us that Adolphe already is engaged. The story leaves him in the same condition, and we are spared a wedding. Nor is there any love-making. It opens with about the most delicious comedy touch that I ever saw on the screen, but I won't tell you what it is. Paramount has made so many pictures lately so poor in quality that they will not be played in the big downtown houses. Undoubtedly A Gentleman of Paris will take the place of one of the flops and it should not be long before you can see this bit of comedy for yourself. You can put down this picture as one you must see.

Bushman Scores in"The Thirteenth Juror"

REALLY powerful performance by Francis X. Bushman is the outstanding feature of The Thirteenth Juror, a screen version of Counsel for the Defense, Henry Irving Dodge's well known play. It is a Universal picture, directed by Edward Laemmle. Charles A. Logue made the adaptation, wrote the continuity, and supervised the story during production. Logue retained in his screen version all the big dramatic punches of the play, weaving them together in a businesslike way that makes the story of the picture an engrossing one. Edward Laemmle can direct, even if he does happen to be Uncle Carl's nephew. He has a fine sense of drama, and a sincerity which he imparts to his cast with the result that his pictures never suffer from a poor quality of acting. He does things with which I do not agree, but he does them deliberately and for a reason that satisfies him of their wisdom. In this picture he brings Bushman, a successful lawyer; Lloyd Whitlock, the district attorney, and Fred Kelsey, a detective, together in Bushman's library. During the entire scene the men wear their hats. No doubt the theory back of it is that owing to the tensity of the scene the men would forget to remove their hats. Men do not either remember or forget to uncover when they should. They do it instinctively. This whole library sequence is the weakest part of the picture technically, and it should have been one of the biggest moments. It is shown in close-ups which take all the life out of it. There is no drama in a man's head occupying the screen alone while he is talking dramatically to a group of people. Such editing as we have in this sequence defies all the rules of picture sense. We can blame the director for robbing the scenes of some of their reality by having the characters retain their hats, but the major fault belongs to whoever is responsible for the editing. But the thing that matters most is that The Thirteenth Juror

is a very good picture, even though there is nothing whatever in it about a thirteenth juror. As I have said, the outstanding feature is Frank Bushman's performance. He emphasizes again the fact that he is one of the most capable actors we have. I could not imagine anyone else carrying his part in this picture with the force, tenderness, impressiveness, and dignity that he displays. He is at all times superb. He is a magnificent specimen of manhood to gaze upon, but not in one foot of film does he give the slightest indication that he is aware of the fact. I am confident that in a series of stories that would give him a chance Bushman could be made one of the greatest box-office bets in the business. Another splendid artist who appears in this picture is Anna Q. Nilsson. Her part is rather negative, as the story revolves around her more than it involves her, but it is an essential part and she handles it with that degree of artistry that characterizes all her screen appearances. Walter Pidgeon also contributes an intelligent and convincing performance, and Whitlock is a thoroughly satisfactory district attorney. Laemmle directed the courtroom scenes splendidly. A trial is a hard thing for a director to reproduce convincingly within the limits of the screen, but Laemmle proved equal to the The Thirteenth Juror is thoroughly satisfactory screen entertainment. It is a picture good enough to be shown in any house anywhere. The lighting, composition of the scenes, and photography are remarkably effective. Paul Perez supplied a set of titles that maintain the high standard of the production.

"Buck Privates" Is an Entertaining Comedy

ELVILLE Brown has given us a new Lya de Putti in his Buck Privates which he recently directed for Universal. She becomes a demure young German lass who falls in love with an American soldier, and plays all phases of the characterization quite delightfully. I am convinced that Miss de Putti can act and that her talent is for comedy, even though we met her first in a dramatic role in Variety. I understand she gave a very good performance in a picture which I have not seen, one directed by James Young, who by now should be making the best pictures of his career, but who, for some unexplained reason, is not presented with many opportunities to do so. In the Brown picture she is cast intelligently and directed intelligently, and so gives a good account of herself. In this picture we have Zasu Pitts also. She contributes a little gem of a performance in an eccentric comedy role. She has no equal on the screen in such a part, just as she has no equal in any other part that suits her, whether it be comedy or tragedy. Buck Privates is a war comedy differing from others of its kind in that it treats both the war and the soldiers with dignity. The drama of trench warfare is brought out strongly in the opening sequence, the placing of the cameras on the floor of the trench heightening the impression that the action takes place below the surface of the earth. In this sequence comedy and drama are mixed adroitly. The three comedy characters, Eddie Gribbon, Les Bates, and Buddy Post, and the leading man, Malcolm McGregor, are introduced in tense scenes which are relieved by the first suggestions that, after all, the picture is to be a comedy. And thereafter it is a comedy rich in humor. McGregor gives a good performance, and under Brown's direction achieves a degree of naturalness that not always distinguishes his screen appearances. Gribbon, of course, is good, and both Bates and Post keep up their ends capably. This part should provide Bates with more important roles than he has been playing. He is an excellent comedian. Brown wrote his own adaptation and working script, being one of the few directors who can do such jobs adequately. He is young in the writing and directing end of pictures, and should go a long way. He still has some of the conventional movie habits. In showing a group of people watching Bates and Post drinking beer he cuts a lane through the onlookers in order that the camera can reach the principal characters. If he had shot the scene from the other side of the bar he would have brought Post and Bates into the foreground and could have grouped the onlookers naturally. A shot of James Marcus, who gives an excellent performance, shows his face smeared with glycerine, despite the fact that a handkerchief is displayed prominently in his upper pocket. No one with a handkerchief ever allows tears to wet his face. I never have seen a glycerine shot that was convincing. The one of Marcus is disgusting. If he had applied the handkerchief to his eyes it would have created the impression of weeping even if he had not been able to pump up any tears. The titles in Buck Privates were written excellently, but they are punctuated with that delightful disregard for accuracy that is characteristic of Universal pictures. The entertainment quality of the Laemmle output is improving steadily, but I can not say as much for the quality of the punctuation. It is never anything but terrible.

What Supervision Cost "Fire Brigade"

ARIOUS reasons have been advanced to explain the failure of The Fire Brigade at the box office. The generally accepted explanation is that its title militated against its success. Titles have some effect on the box office, but I do not believe they can make failures out of good pictures, or make successes out of poor pictures. It is word-of-mouth advertising that is the determining factor in deciding the fate of a picture, and such advertising is not affected by a title. The most a title can do is to lessen the early attendance. If the picture be an outstanding one it can live down the poorest title that can be tacked on it. The other night I viewed The Fire Brigade for a second time in an effort to see if I could determine what is the matter with it. I decided that it lacks what makes Seventh Heaven great: a soul. It tries to embrace too much territory. There is grandfather love in it, also mother love, brother love, and the love of a boy and girl for one another. It is too much. When I watched the superb performance of Charlie Ray, unquestionably one of the two or three best actors on the screen; and the exquisite art of that beautiful creature, May McAvoy, I regretted that Metro had not made a great love story out of the picture, and centered on the young people to make it appealing. But the circumstances under which the picture was made are responsible for its failure. Screen art is subtle. When I first reviewed Seventh Heaven I said, in effect, that such a picture could have been the product only of perfect harmony on the set. The Fire Brigade could have been as great if it had been made as greatly. But it was supervised to death. Throughout the entire time of its making Hunt Stromberg nagged at Bill Nigh

until he nearly drove the director crazy. Once Nigh threatened to kill Stromberg if he did not get off the set, and in a more humane moment threatened to deliver just one blow that would squash Hunt's nose all over his face. Imagine trying to turn out a good picture under such circumstances. If Bill Nigh had been left alone I am confident that The Fire Brigade would have been a box office triumph. Stromberg's method of supervision probably cost Metro the greater part of a million dollars. Nigh was signed for ten weeks in which to make the picture. When he arrived on the lot the story was in such a mess that his first six weeks were devoted to endeavoring to inject some sense in it. The shooting was just nicely under way when his contract expired. For a couple of days the cast remained idle, but the overhead remained active, while the terms of Nigh's continuing contract were discussed. When shooting was resumed the director was subjected to such annoying supervision that it was impossible for him to do his best work. He would be in the middle of a carefully rehearsed scene, and director and actors would be concentrating on it, when Stromberg would visit the set and want to know why the scene was being shot that way, what was the matter with the lights, and who the fellow over there was. Nigh was forced to shoot scenes that he knew were awful, but which were ordered by the supervisor. He shot that great scene between Ray and Holmes Herbert in the way that reached the screen, but Stromberg said it was wrong. It took two days to make the set-up again and reshoot the sequence in accordance with Stromberg's conception of it. It never got beyond the projection-room, but it cost two days overhead. Nigh was twenty-two weeks on the job. If the script had been ready for him when he arrived on the lot, and if Stromberg had let him alone, he could have shot the picture in eight or nine weeks. The thing that is the matter with The Fire Brigade is supervision.

"The Drop Kick" Is Rather Good

ICK Barthelmess is coming back. For a couple of years he appeared in pictures that were far from good, and his performances in them indicated that he knew how poor they were and didn't care. The Patent Leather Kid is doing big business in the East, and The Drop Kick, not yet released, is going to please his present friends and make him a lot of new ones. It is not by any means a flawless picture, but it is a good one, the best that has come out of Burbank for a long time. There must be some people attached to Dick's unit who are not used generally in First National productions, for The Drop Kick possesses virtues that have been missing from most of the recent films that have come from this studio. It is a college story with a definite plot, has good atmosphere, an adequate production, quite good performances, and the most rottenly punctuated titles I have seen this season. Barthelmess can act. For years he has been one of my favorites, and in this picture he becomes again the young fellow whom I have liked. His performance rings true. Playing opposite him is Barbara Kent. A couple of months ago I said in The Spectator that this young woman has something, and after seeing her in The Drop Kick I am more than ever convinced of it. It is not what she does in the picture, but what her performance indicates she

might do that gives me confidence in her future. She has a most appealing screen personality. Dorothy Revier plays a heavy, and although her characterization is so overdone that it becomes ridiculous, she shows that with proper direction she should be capable of doing really good work. It was my first glimpse of her, and I lock for her to do something worth while. Hedda Hopper, always the sterling artist, is well cast and gives a performance of distinction. Eugene Strong, another member of the cast whom I saw for the first time, is splendid as the football coach. He's a good actor. A peculiarity of the story is that the inevitable football game which the hero wins in the last minute, has nothing hinging on the outcome. It is not part of the story, but is a darned good game, well directed and full of thrills. Stock shots are cut into it quite adroitly. Always when I see such shots on the screen I wonder how they impress people who do not understand how pictures are made. I hope they give Dick credit for employing eighty thousand extras. They could get quite a kick out of it. The only fault I have to find with the direction of John Francis Dillon is his habit of grouping his characters so that they face the camera. When Strong commits suicide students rush to his body and cluster on the side of it farthest from the camera. The natural grouping would have been to show them completely surrounding the body. In one sequence in Dorothy Revier's bedroom the window blinds are not drawn, although she is dressed scantily and the room is lighted brilliantly. It is registered that her house is on one of the principal streets of the college town, and if it was her nightly habit to keep her blinds up the front of the house no doubt would have been a favorite gathering place for the students. Inserts of one sheet of a letter showed it to have four lines of writing on it. A medium shot of what was supposed to be the same insert showed eight or nine lines of writing. Such things, although small in themselves, show carelessness in the technical end of the production. One shot shows Barbara's face most unbecomingly smeared with glycerine although she has a handkerchief in her hand. First National should not confine its economy urge to glycerine. But I congratulate the organization upon its success in demonstrating that it can make a good picture occasionally. I had begun to despair.

Anne Cornwall Fine in "Heart of the Yukon"

CORRESPONDENT says this about me: "Much to my regret, I have arrived at the conclusion that you have in your sanctum only pens that carp and criticize: that the kindly ink of commendation is arid in your well." A base calumny! My indignation is aroused and I welcome an opportunity to refute this distressing charge. To-wit: Recently I had occasion to drop in at the Hillstreet theatre where a variety bill was supplemented by one of the customary "filler" pictures; in this case a Tacoma, Washington, production announced as Heart of the Yukon. In the summer-warm theatre the snowy slopes of Mount Rainier were pleasing to behold. The hero, John Bowers, was consistently and super-actively heroic; the villain, Russell Simpson, was malignantly unswerving in the abysmal depth of his iniquity; the sympathetic Old Party, Frank Campeau, never for an instant was allowed to relax his insistence upon my compassion. It was all most restful, because in no case was I called upon to flagellate my mind to appreciate subtleties: for there were none. You see? So far, no word but praise. Now I am about to cap even this encomium. The girla buffeted child of fortune-was played by Anne Cornwall, who in recent months seems to have deserted dramatic roles of lovely heroines in distress for the more vivacious scintillation of comedy, twinkling as Al Christie's one and only girl star. I have known Anne for some time as an exceedingly pretty girl, small, smart, and glimmering with mischief. Seeing her name on the main title I anticipated seeing again the Anne I know. And when she flashed into view I received a surprise: for of all wistful, bedraggled, hopelessly and pathetically ugly little brats I ever have seen she took the cake! And what a performance she gave! Despite the pictorial calamities which pursued her, the frightful cinematographic perils which beset her, Anne managed to surmount the handicap of story triteness and brought to her work a personality and an art that shone through the deliberately hideous makeup required by the part. Hers was a real performance, one of which any artist might justly be proud. Of course the Ugly Duckling became the glowing beauty. It was inevitable; just as inevitable as the happy ending in which virtue and the hero triumphed, and in which iniquity received its merited and deadly punishment. It was that kind of a picture. Heart of the Yukon is Anne Cornwall's private property all the way. She wrapped the story up and put it in her pocket. Some day that young woman is going to be given a crack at a really big role. And when she gets it, the acclaim which will follow after will prompt me to say, with pardonable complaisance, "I told you so."

And a Little Child Shall Show Them

EG Denny has done something pretty big for a star. He has written a story that deliberately gives the picture made from it to someone else. It is a sensible thing to do, for a star's box-office value is fixed by the quality of the pictures he appears in and not solely by his contributions to them. Everyone who was a big box-office attraction yesterday and is not to-day lost his drawing power through poor stories and not because he can not act as well as he used to. Of course this goes for both sexes. The most valuable reputation a star can have is one for always appearing in a good picture. You can take a person with but slight knowledge of acting, surround him always with good actors, provide him with good stories, and give him good direction, and he can become the biggest money maker in the business. Tom Meighan was made that way, but his success gave him the idea that he could act and that he was a judge of stories. This was the beginning of his end. John Barrymore and Adolphe Menjou are two stars who will last a long time, for each insists upon getting the best story possible and wants only the most talented artists surrounding him. Each of them has told me more than once that if anyone can steal his picture from him so much the better for the picture, and I believe both of them are sincere. Not more than five per cent. of our stars hold this sensible view. The average woman star believes that the public is interested more in which side of her face is photographed than it is in the entertainment quality of

her pictures. Close-ups, which detract so much from nearly all pictures, are insisted upon by nine out of ten stars, none of whom has sense enough to know that the public is getting fed up on gigantic features of players. The evil that stars do to pictures is, of course, blamable on the incapacity of producers, who know nothing of pictures themselves and give the stars too much leeway in deciding what must go into them. If we are to judge by Denny's latest, He's My Daddy, an atrocious name for such a sincere picture, he is one of the few sensible stars. True, he did not give the part that steals the picture to anyone who will challenge his supremacy, for the person who enacted the part happens to be a four-year-old girl who is going to be somewhat of a sensation when the picture is released. The young lady's name is Mary Jane La Verne, and in the picture she is called "Pudge", which I think is a splendid name, and it is the one by which I hereafter shall refer to her. Pudge is pretty, with that prettiness which suggests intelligence. She seems to be totally unconscious of the existence of a camera, and judging by what I saw of her on the screen, it must have been a joy to direct her. In the picture she reflects many moods, for it is a big part, and she is absolutely perfect in each of them. When she cries you can see her lips quivering and her throat contracting, corroborative testimony to the genuineness of the tears that pour from her eyes; and when she laughs, she laughs all over with a mirth that is contagious. There is a hint of drama in some of her scenes and she handles it as convincingly as all the other phases. She must have understood her part, for there is not the slightest sign of an effort to portray an emotion that she did not comprehend. When He's My Daddy is

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released our established actors and actresses should view it and try to discover what it is that this four-year-old child has and they lack.

Story Strong in Human Interest

TE'S My Daddy—I shudder every time I write it is going to be a success because it is compounded of the ingredients that make for success: it makes us laugh and cry. It is Pudge's story from the first. She is an abused, ragged youngster, who dreams of an ideal daddy, and she will gain the instant sympathy of any audience. Through a succession of laughable incidents she accumulates Reg as her daddy, and he lives up to her fondest dreams. The story is not told sentimentally, and there is nothing mawkish about it, comedy predominating all the way through, yet it has a strong sentimental appeal and will send you out of the theatre feeling just a little more confident that all's well with the world. It is inconceivable to me why producers consistently ignore the heart in selecting stories. If you have heart interest in a production you can take liberties with everything else in it and still have an acceptable picture. Heart interest is a known quantity, the one thing that always pleases the majority. Pudge goes straight to your heart when she first appears in-in-I can't write it again-and thereafter your sole interest in the picture is what happens to her. And because he has a story with a definite thought in it, and because that thought is a big one, Denny appears to better advantage than he has in any other picture he has made. His characterization is based on something tangible, and he acts almost as well as Pudge. He does not resort to grimaces and horseplay to put over his points. In no scene is his acting at all overdone. Barbara Kent, whom I refer to somewhere else in this issue, plays opposite Reg, and again her sweetness and sincerity register. She has a suggestion of the same quality of wistfulness that makes Janet Gaynor so outstanding. She will not be the actress that Janet is already, but she is quite young, and under Henry Hennigson's wise guidance will amount to something. Tom O'Brien is a traffic cop in this picture and plays the part splendidly. Lilian Rich has a role that gives very little more than her beauty a chance to register. Fred Newmeyer directed. He deserves great credit for the sincerity that the picture reveals. He handles all his larger scenes in a capable manner, but commits many minor faults which interfere with the smoothness of the production. Some of these faults were in the script and the editing, and all of them could have been avoided easily. When the step-mother of Pudge appears, Denny asks her to surrender the child to him, and instead of sending her to his attorney he gives her a check forthwith and gets nothing in writing from her. Everyone in any audience who has even the haziest notion of the existence of adoption laws will note the weakness in the scene. And Denny stands up as he writes the check, notwithstanding the fact that there are several tables in the room. It is unreal and unconvincing. In one shot Armand Kaliz walks the length of a couch. In a subsequent cut to the same scene he makes the same walk again. Denny stands in front of a glass door and goes through a lot of contortions to keep those in the room from seeing Pudge who is outside the door. He could have accomplished his purpose merely by pulling together the

curtains that were hanging on the door. If it was thought that the contortions were necessary to provoke a laugh, as they did, why were the curtains on the door? When Pudge gets a collection of clothes the boxes containing them are piled in the drawing-room. Despite the fact that the house is full of servants the boxes are allowed to remain there, instead of being taken to her room. The love story between Denny and Barbara is not developed at all. It merely is. The titles are clever. There are some of the wittiest that I have seen in any picture, but they are punctuated in accordance with the ignorance system which is so much in vogue out at Universal City.

Something We've Touched on Before

THILE the postman continues on his rounds there can not be a complete shortage of ideas for Spectator paragraphs. "In pointing out faults you are always specific except in the cases of criticism of screen punctuation," comes a message in a feminine hand. "I do not see how you expect us to profit from such criticism unless you show us just what you mean." Very well. Take some titles in a late Universal picture, Buck Privates, directed by Melville Brown, and a very entertaining picture. The titles are well written, but I imagine that there are more than one hundred mistakes in them that anyone with a grammar school education should be able to correct. "Supposing we sit down-there's a million things I want to say to you," is one title, spoken by a character who is presented as an educated person, therefore no liberties can be taken with his speech without taking him out of character. This title is wrong in wording, grammar and punctuation. This is the way it should have been presented: "Suppose we sit down. There are a million things I want to say to you." Another example: "Poor Cupidthat one must have had his number on it." Correct: "Poor Cupid! That one, etc." Again: "Lay off-this is my glory." Correct: "Lay off! This is, etc." To conclude: "What is your name and rank?" Correct: "What are your name and rank?" They will tell you on the Universal lot that if the punctuation which I give were used on the screen it would give audiences optical heebie-jeebies. That is the alibi advanced by all the other studios. The truth is that they do not know how to punctuate and they present this excuse to cloak their ignorance. But there is one feature of the titles in Buck Privates that deserves commendation. It is a war comedy and there are both Americans and Germans in it. When a title is spoken by a German it is put on the screen in type that approximates German script; when one is spoken by an American it is printed in our ordinary block letters. It's quite an idea as it assists in identifying the speaker as well as showing that one of the styles of type indicates a translation into English. It is a much better device than the usual one of dissolving from a foreign language into English. I believe it is Mel Brown's idea, but I don't suppose he would raise a fuss if others used it.

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Jack Gilbert Not Much as a Critic

TILL Jack Gilbert please go back to his make-up box and the Kleig lights and leave criticizing to those of us who have adopted it as a habit? Almost simultaneously with the release of Twelve Miles Out he informed the world through the medium of the Associated Press that it was a punk picture and that he had a violent inward craving to do something more worthy of his artistic attainments. I presumed that a picture whose star denied it virtues must have none, consequently I steered shy of this one that offended Jack, for, to make a confession, I have grown tired of finding fault with the product of the Metro lot and did not wish deliberately to pick out another picture that would lead me to do it again. But I became part of a dinner party that wound up at Twelve Miles Out—and I think that Jack is a bum critic. It is not by any means a great picture, but it is a highly entertaining one. There was not a foot of it that did not interest me. It is darned good motion picture stuff all the way through, and Jack Conway has given it excellent and intelligent direction. It wooed me into such a complacent mood that I forgave it even its too generous use of close-ups. In fact, the gravest charge I can bring against it is the way Joan Crawford wore her hair. I am beginning to notice hairdressing. I don't know what's come over me. Joan seemed to have given considerable thought to how she was to treat her bob, and to have arrived at the decision to adopt the style that would make her look as unattractive as possible. Her eyes are rather prominent, and to offset them she should be a bit fluffy about the temples, but she chose in this picture to draw her hair back severely from her forehead, thus making her eyes more prominent than ever. I hope she never will do it again, for she has considerable ability as an actress, and should not do things to distract our attention from her art. Reverting to more masculine meditations: I liked Gilbert's performance better than any he has given since The Big Parade. It was refreshing to see him as a regular tough guy, something that gave him an opportunity to do a definite characterization. The only fault that I can find with him is that the expression of his eyes is the same in all the moods he portrays, a failing he always has. In the mechanics of his acting he is perfect, and I do not agree with him that he was miscast. Ernest Torrence gives quite a wonderful performance, although I think that at times he indulges in too many facial contortions. His best moments are when he becomes serious and keeps his face straight. He is delightful, though, in his comedy touches, and his acting was the feature that I enjoyed most in the picture. When the end came I prepared to mutter to my neighbor a protest against the folly of letting Gilbert live-and he died. It is a superb ending, and the only logical one, but I thought that the obsession for happy endings would rule again. However, if the ending did not run true to movie traditions, the manner in which it comes about does. Gilbert dies with his eyes shut, which is faulty direction. To hark back to Joan: she has one love scene with Gilbert in which she is particularly effective, and which gives evidence of her growing power as an actress. But I do not agree with her characterization. She is too highbrow to fall in love with such a tough customer as Gilbert was supposed to be. All my

No Wonder the Horses Laugh

IF THERE is any truth in the adage that, "A fool and his money are easily parted," then this must be a nation of lunatics, and when you think that ninety per cent of the adult American population are betting "Billions" (not mere millions!), but Billions—Get it, Billions, of good American Dollars that they can and will live for ten or twenty years whether God likes it or not, can you doubt it?

Such a thing is either a blasphemy or lunacy. Don't laugh. "You are one of them," You, whoever you are, who reads this, You and the other eight-nine per cent of the Intelligent (?) American adults; betting Life Insurance Companies "Billions" that you can beat Death and beat God (if you don't believe in one you sure will in the other sooner or later), and you have been doing this thing year after year, for over fifty years now.

Poor and ever beloved Abraham Lincoln would never have said, "You can't fool all the people all the time," if he had studied Life Insurance.

When one thinks of it he must admit that we are a lot of Financial Morons.

You would laugh at "The poor Fish" who would bet ten dollars that Dempsey would win the championship, and another ten that he would not, and yet before the grin has left your face, you walk up to the insurance betting ring, and lay down a thousand that you will die this year, and another thousand that you won't. Ha! Ha! No wonder the horses laugh.

That's Life Insurance, as it is bought to-day by ninety per cent of the Intelligent (?) Americans.

For six weeks we have been trying to teach you this, and that we can get you back 25% or more of what you have spent on your insurance; that we can save it from inheritance tax; and that, "THAT WAS NOT ALL", but telling the American public something that is for their own good usually invites suspicion.

Tell an American he is foolish, and you are RADICAL.

Prove to him that he is a fool, and you are an ANARCHIST.

Try and stop him from being a fool, and you are a BOLSHEVIST.

Prove that Life Insurance as an Investment is bunk, and you are a TWISTER.

To buy Life Insurance properly, you must take the investment part out of the insurance, which is in reality, "Taking the lie out of life insurance", THAT IS TWISTING.

N.B.

I have no insurance to sell. It costs nothing to find out the truth of what I say, and I will be glad to answer in the future as I have done in the past, any inquiries addressed c/o The Film Spectator.

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objections to Twelve Miles Out are petty ones. I think it is quite delightful to have a picture about bootlegging and high-jacking. High-jacking is a splendid way to get liquor; one gets it by the thousand cases, and has some exquisite sport thrown in for good measure. Bootleggers play such an intimate part in the lives of all of us that we have a personal interest in the worries that beset them. The picture is a red-blooded one, and it is clean, amusing and thrilling. I congratulate Metro, and also Jack Conway.

Cog-Wheels Play the Leading Parts

MOTION picture in which the characters are played by tin pans, steam whistles, cog-wheels, and piledrivers is somewhat of a novelty. I saw such a one the other day, Ballet Mecanique. It was produced by Dudley Murphy, a motion picture composer. I call him a picture "composer" because he seems to me to have a feeling for this medium analogous to the composer's feeling for music. With a wide range of technical and camera experience at his command, he develops his stories from the original theme or idea with a vivid imagination for business and characterization, plus that new dimension which makes pictures interesting-rhythm. The composer is always conscious of his tempo and rhythm, and so is Murphy. In his film, Ballet Mecanique, I saw a motion picture conceived as a separate and distinct art-a "pure movie" whose drama is the thrill of dynamics. It has a rhythm that develops a suspense and holds its audience without a plot, and stirs them on to an emotional pitch by a deft handling of its tempo. In his continuity of The Skyscraper I saw how he composes his action so that his tempo builds with his plot and characterization. To an already dramatic story he has added that third dimension, usually left to the director and cutter, tempo-so that in reading some of this continuity I got a tremendous sense of the rhythm of construction. Such an ability is tremendously valuable to a producer for it is this tempo that often makes or breaks a picture, and if one can visualize it to stimulate the director's mind, in addition to the situation and business, what a valuable continuity it is. As an example of his work I remember in Gloria Swanson's last picture, Love of Sunya, what a refreshing note Murphy gave to the picture by his handling of the crystal sequences. They had personality because of their tempo. Murphy wrote, directed and photographed these short episodes of the picture and the critics and public welcomed his contribution. It seems to me that motion picture "composer" is a better term than "writer", for this medium is closer to music than to writing. But to apply it to the average writer would be false, for few of them really know the camera and have feeling for the rhythm and timing of pictures. Murphy should go far in the directorial field of pictures.

One of the most ridiculous things we do to pictures is to inject "comedy relief" in them, scenes which have no relation to the context of the story and which are inserted in the extraordinary belief that you must provide the morons in the audience with a few things to laugh at. There are two such scenes in The Devil's Paradise, an otherwise well sustained drama directed by Michael Curtiz for Warner Brothers. One of them is simply silly and

the other is disgusting. The rest of the picture is dramatic and beautiful. The presumption must be that the morons do not like drama and beauty and must be given nonsense and vulgarity. Both these objectionable shots combined are on the screen about one minute. The whole picture runs about seventy-five minutes. Will Jack Warner tell me how he can make morons like a picture by giving them one minute of something that pleases them and seventy-four minutes of something that bores them? The whole theory upon which this kind of "comedy relief" is inserted is wrong, and it reveals that the studio responsible for it lacks the ability to think in terms of the business it is in.

When the confessions were in order at the Biltmore conferences would have been an appropriate time for Louis B. Mayer to explain why he brought Natalie Kovanko to this country. She co-starred with Moskvine in Michael Strogoff and was considered one of the best screen actresses in France. Metro signed her to a five-year contract with the six months optional clause. For six months she did nothing, not doing one day's work during the entire time, but she drew her salary. Metro did not exercise the option, turning her loose without having given her an opportunity of becoming known in Hollywood studios. Apart altogether from the business aspect of it, it was a disgraceful way to treat an artist. If the actors had not allowed the eloquence of Conrad Nagel and Milton Sills to make fools of them they would have joined Equity and made of it a body strong enough to force the producers



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to grant an equitable contract which would make the optional clause a mutual agreement whereby the artist could insist upon the contract running for its full term if he so desired.

Norman Webb and I are going to have a lot of fun. In the first part of The Spectator I am going to continue to give my opinion of pictures and in the back part he is going to check up on me by showing just how the pictures attract the public. We look at films from directly opposite angles. To him a picture that makes a lot of money must be good. I am not interested in how much money they make. I know a lot of pictures with which I found fault have been financial successes, and in not a few cases while condemning them I acknowledged that they would roll up profits. With ghoulish glee Norman consulted his figures to show me how far I was off the track in my selection of the ten worst pictures of the year to date. He was chagrined to find that all but one of them are losing money. The exception was Stranded in Paris. But my opinion of it remains unaltered.

When I viewed Seventh Heaven for the first time I thought I had enjoyed the greatest bliss that the screen could provide. But last week I enjoyed even a greater bliss: I viewed Seventh Heaven a second time. I had a delicious cry. When I viewed it the first time I was impressed so much with the production as a whole that I did not ask myself what one thing about it gave it its great appeal. After seeing it the second time I left the Circle Theatre with my mind made up that Janet Gaynor is Seventh Heaven. I am aware that all the performances are perfect, but there is a soul in the picture, and it is the soul of little "Diane", so marvelously played by Janet Gaynor. All the drama and all the humanity in this wonderfully human production have value to the extent that they bear relation to the central character.

To me there never is anything pleasant in the sight of people eating. Such scenes on the screen always are more or less disgusting. I believe that the great majority of people agree with me, therefore the majority will like the manner in which a meal is presented in A Gentleman of Paris, Adolphe Menjou's latest, directed by D'Arrast. In any picture the important thing is not what there is in a scene but what you see in it. When this meal was over I could not remember having seen any food on the table or having noticed anyone really eating anything. Yet I got the impression that a full breakfast had been served. I don't know how D'Arrast contrived it, for the sequence was over before I was aware of its perfections.

Someone telephoned me from Glendale the other night that a house over there was showing a Universal picture that had one correctly punctuated title in it. In my haste to see it I was arrested for speeding and missed about one hundred feet of the picture. Somewhere in the part I missed must have been the title that excited my informant.

And now the Examiner announces in a screaming line across its theatrical page that Marion Davies's sister is to do something or other on the screen. We have grown used to the modest manner in which the Hearst papers

exploit Marion, but it is going to be tough if we have to go through the inuring process over again for each member of her family.

In opposing the eight-hour day Al Rockett points to himself and says that for the fourteen years he has been in the picture business he has worked from fifteen to twenty hours a day. If he had had a little more sleep during the fourteen years he might by now have something to his credit in addition to Abraham Lincoln.

WARNING!

The readers of The Film Spectator are warned against paying any attention to the articles recently appearing in this magazine on the subject of Life Insurance, signed "RUNYADHA, LTD."

These articles are evidently written by a "Twister", and are all the more dangerous because the "Twister" has not the nerve to come out and say anything which an insurance representative can contradict.

He merely tells you that you can get back part of what you have paid in, and calls it an overcharge, in the hope that he may invite those who have wisely invested in insurance as a saving to themselves, to seek his advice, and you are warned against paying any attention, or making any inquiries without first consulting your insurance company, which will always give you free advice regarding the conditions of the policies which you hold.-ADV.

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STORY OF THE BOX-OFFICE

By NORMAN WEBB

THE Spectator has received a letter from "Pink" Wingart, director of publicity for F. B. O., wherein he defends his boss, William LeBaron, vice-president in charge of production at the F. B. O. studios in Hollywood. He says LeBaron should have a better rating than I gave him.

have a better rating than I gave him. I am certainly sorry to note that Mr. Wingart thinks I am belittling Mr. LeBaron by placing his name as the twelfth best box office supervisor in the fifth largest industry in the United States. I should rather call it quite an honor, especially after looking at the names of numerous successful supervisors who are listed below Mr. LeBaron.

True enough, Mr. LeBaron is one of the best equipped executives in the motion picture business, but as to the statement of no one being able to estimate his worth at the box-office, that is a little off color. Every single supervisor who is rated above LeBaron, has pictures that have averaged better at the box-office in the last eighteen months, or his name would not appear there.

While Mr. LeBaron was the supervisor on Beau Geste and numerous other Paramount successes, he also has had his weaker pictures and boxoffice flops. While you say that I may not realize all of the great things

that Mr. LeBaron has accomplished, it so happens that for a short time I was in the Famous Players home office at 485 Fifth Avenue, while Mr. LeBaron was supervisor of the Long Island studio. Accordingly, having been a former reporter, as well as being in the picture business for eleven years, there was not much that passed by my ears.

I remember very distinctly when Walter Wanger returned from the coast saying that Ben Schulberg had said "thumbs down" on Beau Geste, as there was no love story to it. And we all know how LeBaron went ahead and made one of the greatest boxoffice hits of the year out of this story. As a matter of fact, I gave LeBaron full credit for this in my very first "Story of the Box-Office."

But it so happens that the ratings we are giving writers, supervisors, directors and players are not based on one picture, but on all the pictures with which they are credited for the last nineteen months, since January 1, 1926, when this box-office system was inaugurated. If we rated writers, supervisors, etc., on their most successful picture over this period, we would probably find at least 25% of them rated at 100%, including Mr. LeBaron, of course. But since the motion picture business is supposedly

run on a solid rock business basis to make money, we must apply the law of averages, and rate the different members of the personnel on all of their work, instead of on one of their masterpieces.

Before Mr. LeBaron can be called a 100% showman, he must learn the proper development of motion picture stars. Because W. C. Fields was a big legitimate star in New York and scored a hit in a part in one of D. W. Griffith's pictures, and because the Junior stars graduated from the Paramount Actors' School, does not mean that you can star them and make the public accept them.

Thalberg with Billy Haines, and Schulberg with Esther Ralston, have both recently proven the right and only way to make motion picture stars. They have started their respective proteges off in small parts and gradually worked them into featured leads. Then, some time later, when the public decided that they liked them well enough, they were starred. And both of them have been very successfully launched, as you will notice by glancing at the figures on the recent Haines and Ralston pictures.

After LeBaron had found that Tommy Meighan's box-office value was dropping away, he decided to try

PARAMOUNT'S 1927 HONOR ROLL

Outstanding Releases

From January 1st to May 1st, 1927

TITLES	In Charge of Production	Editor in Chief of Feature Producer	DIRECTOR	WRITERS
"LOVE'S GREATEST MISTAKE"	William LeBaron	Ralph Block	Edward Sutherland	Frederick A. Kummer Becky Gardiner V
"CABARET"	William LeBaron	Ralph Block	Robert Vignola	Owen Davis Becky Gardiner

(NOTE-The above two pictures are mentioned in list of Paramount 1927 Honor Roll)

BECKY GARDINER V

DEMMY LAMSON, Mgr. Ruth Collier, Associate and build him up in a strong vehicle, Tin Gods, by giving him an excellent director, Allan Dwan, and a strong supporting cast with such names as Renee Adoree, Aileen Pringle and William Powell.

This worked out very well. But LeBaron, instead of benefiting by the knowledge of the huge box-office returns on this picture, reverted to his former regime of making cheap Meighan pictures, with the result that the next two releases, The Canadian, and Blind Alleys, are both practically

rated as box-office failures, as they have dropped to 70%.

Undoubtedly, the biggest flop of all those made under LeBaron's super-vision was D. W. Griffith's costly production, The Sorrows of Satan. After the failure of The Sorrows of Satan as a road-show in New York, it was released on the regular Paramount program as a special, and dropped to 79% on the rating list. It is the general concensus of opinion that it only held this rating on the strength of Menjou's name. Many of his program pictures have done much better than this one at the box-office.

One of the last pictures LeBaron supervised before leaving the Long Island studio was Rubber Heels, starring Ed Wynn. This picture has been re-cut and re-titled and is still such a hopeless mess that the Paramount home office is trying to figure out if it should release it or burn it.

It is certainly surprising that after the failure of W. C. Fields, Eddie

Cantor, Beatrice Lillie, Leon Errol, and numerous other legitimate stars to make good in the same status on the screen, Lasky and LeBaron still thought that they could elevate another New York stage star, Ed Wynn. But I suppose we must all live

During the production of the 1926-27 Paramount Pictures, that company waged a competitive battle between its Eastern and Western studios to determine which studio could turn out the best product at the least cost. Monte Katterjohn was made the drive captain of the Western studio, and Henry Salsbury of the Eastern studio. When Schulberg's Western studio finally won out, Paramount closed its Long Island studio, moving all of its units West, and appointing Mr. Le-Baron to a position in the Paramount home-office. A very short time later we heard that Joe Kennedy, president of F. B. O., had signed LeBaron to go West and take charge of the F. B. O. studios in Hollywood.

First: Adolph Zukor is on the board of directors of a New Jersey bank that has much to do with the financing of F. B. O. pictures.

Second: Paramount bought a foreign Sascha production, Moon of Israel, and because it was too similar to their own production, The Ten Commandments, to put in their own houses, they turned it over to F. B. O. for distribution last May. Lee Marcus of F. B. O. recently booked this picture into the Roxy.

Third: Although Joe Kennedy is still producing the Fred Thomson pictures at the F. B. O. studios, he is releasing them through the Paramount exchanges. This is easily explained when we consider the number of houses controlled by Publix, plus the fact that a Paramount exchange can ask an independent exhibitor a much higher rental for a "Western" than an F. B. O. exchange can. Exhibitors will probably remember back in 1916 that Paramount not only had the Famous Players-Lasky exchanges, but that it leaked out that they also owned the Realart exchanges for handling their cheaper program pictures, and then again in 1918, that they also owned the Artcraft exchanges.

Fourth: Many executives, directors and players have been switched directly from the Paramount to the F. B. O. payroll. Among these are William LeBaron, Ed King, Wallace Fox, George B. Seitz, Richard Rosson, Margaret Morris and other Junor. Stars of the Paramount Actors' School.

In conclusion, I still say that while LeBaron has proven himself a master showman, his record is not nearly as strong at the box-office as Thalberg and Schulberg, whom I still contend hold the biggest executive positions in the industry and probably will continue to do so for some time.

The Stolen Bride again shows Billie Dove's perfect taste in dress.

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SUN UP

For sheer human-ness it would be very difficult indeed to find a play with greater depth or sincerity than Sun Up, at the Egan theatre, or a finer actress than Lucille la Verne. The play has a repressed force and a stirring straightness of purpose that hold its audience from the first to the last moment, and in the interpretation given to it by Miss la Verne, both in her acting and direction, there is the same greatness that characterizes all her work. Largely it is a story of mother-love. Simplicity is its chief attribute; the simplicity of the mountains and the people of the mountains who, if necessary, will daringly disregard a law, but to whom the law of hospitality or the bond of a promise can only be broken by death. It is a great play greatly rendered, and it is well worth a visit.

CONVOY

Convoy is such a terrible picture that I refuse to dignify it by putting a review of it among the other reviews in this issue. The story might have been supplied by someone who stopped advancing mentally when he had become almost simple-minded, and the direction made it worse. When the shots provided by the U. S. Naval department were not on the screen there was nothing to interest the audience. The whole thing is a pitiful attempt at picture-making.

FOOLISH

The Fox studio prides itself upon its staff of young University chaps who read the stories submitted by authors. The fact that none of them knows anything about pictures does not temper the pride. What the Fox story department and all other such departments need are readers who have lived long enough to know something about life, something that no university on earth can teach. The Fox policy is one of the prize follies of 1927.

WHERE'S THE COMEDY?

In He's My Daddy, Reg Denny's latest, packages are piled on a chauffeur's outstretched arms until they tower above his head, making it impossible for him to see where he is going. This is one of the institutional bits of screen comedy. There is nothing funny in it, but someone started doing it years ago, and our present crop of directors apparently can not think beyond it.

Will Act as Secretary to motion picture artist or executive, or handle fan mail; familiar with industry; free to travel.

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PRODUCTION VALUES.

By MARY O'HARA

IN AN earlier issue of The Spectator, I advanced the theory that in the making of every picture, four talents are needed: that of writer, playwright, photographic artist and director. An analysis of certain well-known screen personalities will show clearly just what I mean.

In seeing a picture it is easy to know whether or not there has been a photographic artist on the job, or a playwright, etc. But unless one has been in close touch with the picture in the making, one can not name with any certainty the artists responsible for those "invisible production values". It might so easily happen that the photographic artist is an insignificant assistant of some kind; or the playwright a friend of the writer or director with whom he hob-nobs in off hours. So I will begin with some directors for whom I have written scenarios.

Rex Ingram is the photographic artist-director, and in a small way writer, too. His pictures are always, first and foremost, beautiful. He was a writer before he became a director and although he usually supplements his ability in this line with another writer, yet this gift supplies him with business and atmosphere. But as a playwright he is utterly lacking. He always shoots a vast deal too muchinsists upon doing so—is unaware that a picture as a whole needs qualities of rhythm and balance quite as much as atmosphere and beauty, and will always sacrifice construction for the particular effects or situations to which he is partial. He should be sure that whatever writer he has with him is also a playwright, or that he has

John Stahl, on the contrary, is primarily a playwright. He is the director-playwright. More than any director with whom I have ever worked does he understand the importance of balance and rhythm, preparation, climax, footage—of working effectively within limits. It must be very rare that he over-shoots to any great extent. Therefore, his pictures are as smooth as a chromatic scale and are never manhandled in the cutting. They are to the point and say what they intend to say, and usually look as if nothing had been shot that is not in the picture. But they are always drab and uninteresting to the eye. He needs a photographic artist, and he needs a fluent writer.

Frank Lloyd's abilities are similar to Stahl's. He is not, I believe, so thoroughly trained a playwright, but he has that type of logical, analytical mind and sufficient experience to have become highly efficient. This combination of director-playwright is always efficient, but not always brilliant or artistic. Lloyd should have a fluent writer and a photographic artist. It seems that the abilities of photo-

graphic artist and playwright are rarely found in one person. At this moment I can not think of a single case

King Vidor, with the exception of D. W. Griffith, comes nearer than any other big director to combining all these abilities in his one person. Left alone to choose his own material and make a picture, the result would show Vidor to be a writer, playwright (to a moderate extent) and director, but not a photographic artist. This lack would of course never interfere with a director's success. The general public does not demand beauty nor criticize the lack of it, but it does praise it and delight in it when it occurs. If more pictures had it the standard would be raised and the public would become more educated along that line.

To mention a couple for whom I have not written, but who are striking examples familiar to all:

Von Stroheim is a writer-director. If he realized his lack of the playwright's ability and believed as I do that such an ability is of paramount importance in making a picture, he would supply himself with a playwright whose mind and talents were such that he could collaborate happily with him. Then we would see on the screen something resembling Von Stroheim's original vision of his pictures, which I think has never happened up to date. It is inevitably mutilated in the cutting; sometimes the story is not even told; the point is lost entirely. Material which has a correct balance and charming rhythm in one hundred thousand feet, can not possibly have them in ten thousand feet. Von Stroheim also needs a photographic artist, for his pictures are not beautiful to the eye.

Ferdinand Pinney Earle is a photographic artist of the most extraordinary ability. Nothing more beautiful than his Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam ever has appeared on the screen. But it was not dramatic and not interesting; and few people are so appreciative of mere beauty that they are willing to sit for an hour or more seeing a succession of beautiful photographs. It is a crying shame if Earle does not find an outlet upon the screen for his unique talent. But he, too, should take stock, should know himself, should understand that although he is unusually gifted, it is along one line only, and that if he should produce another picture, he can not expect success unless he supplies himself with a writer and a playwright and a director.

Let no one think that I would approve of four people making a picture, all with equal authority. Such a thing would be impossible. It is hard enough to get two people to agree. No, I go to the opposite extreme. I agree with those who say that a picture should

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be made by one person. Rex Ingram once said to me, "Making a picture is a one-man job, and one man can't do it." This is true. The answer is, collaboration. Let each man know just what his own ability is. Let him not deceive himself. Let him then get what other talent he needs. He will find it impossible to collaborate with certain people, and very possible, in fact inspiring, to collaborate with others. Every one knows this. It is a matter of mental affinity. Let him keep all the authority in his own hands and make all final decisions as to what shall and shall not go into the picture, himself, so that the picture will be a cross section of life seen through one single eye, as every work of art must be. Only in this way can we have originality on the screen and get away from the deadly monotony of films as they are now. Moreover, this

is the only way the undertaking could be carried to a successful conclusion. There must be a general to every army if it is to function.

This general, or supervisor, as he is called in the industry, should be that one of the four artists whom I have described who is intrusted by the producer with the responsibility of the production. And he should have the responsibility for the failure or success of the picture, with no opportunity to pass the buck. And the producer should really trust him with the picture, and allow no one to interfere, nor interfere himself.

This would amount to a revival of the unit system, of which I am strongly in favor, with the supervisor one of the picture-makers, instead of a business manager, or an executive of the organization.

called "American" type of comedy.
And yet the producers continue to think them morons.

*

What is the matter with our producers, anyway?

I used to go to a cheap picture house downtown and see all the screen plays. The audience was made up of people engaged in business and trade on Spring and Main streets-Mexicans, Italians, Irishmen, sailors, men who worked in second-hand book stores, pawnbrokers, clerks, stenographers, mothers with babies in their arms, old ladies, old soldiers, pick-pockets (I had my purse stolen there once), precise ladies with "Science and Health" tucked under their arms, I. W. W.'s, negroes and a Chinaman or two. A more representative audience it would be hard to find.

Once they were showing The Tower of Lies, directed by Victor Seastrom. When the last reel flickered to a finish there was a staccato burst of applause. And yet this is the type of audience for which those godawful serials are made.

The Tower of Lies was reviewed in one of our "highbrow" periodicals. In the review the old myth once more raised its head. The review said that The Tower of Lies was superb, a very great picture, "an epic of the soil", etc., and added, "but doubtless the public will not appreciate it".

Why insult the public's intelligence

this way?

Why not give the poor and continually-damned public a chance? * * *

But let's get down to business; let's

talk of salesmanship!

You can't peddle clothes-brushes from door to door, from family to family and say, "These are fine clothes-brushes, the best ever madebut I doubt if any but people used to expensive and foreign-made clothes-brushes would know how to use them or get any good out of them."

Do you think the housewife, or the father of the family, or the son or daughter of the house would buy after such a sales talk? Not on your life! They'd shut the door in your face. You couldn't sell a brush and, of course, you might go about lament-ing the fact that the "American" people were unappreciative and too dumb to know well made brushes when they met them.

Why not sell these people the brushes first because of their actual value? Undoubtedly, for we are an adaptable nation, they would soon learn to use them with skill and understanding. They might even order

Recently a nice little wife who is a neighbor of mine looked through the photoplay reviews of the week. She and her husband wanted to go to the theatre Sunday afternoon. I advised one of the pictures showing downtown, a picture they both would have appreciated. But unfortunately a review of the picture had in it the

THE GREAT HOLLYWOOD MYTH

By MADELEINE MATZEN

T'S a myth carefully manufactured by the heads of the picture trust. It is widely broadcast by highly paid press agents; you see mention of it in the fan magazines, for fan magazines have policies and are obliged to print the things dictated by those who advertise in their publications. The myth has been repeated so many times that those who manufactured it have actually grown to believe it is true, like the liar who repeated his lies until he believed them himself.

It is the myth which insists that the average motion picture spectator does not appreciate good pictures, that artistic, consistent pictures telling the truth about life have no box-office value, that those who go to the motion pictures are morons and not very high grade morons at that.

Now I think this is a most unappreciative and ungrateful attitude on the part of the producers who have wrested huge fortunes from the very public whom they so basely malign. Incidentally it is a stupid myth to invent, it isn't even interesting to read about. The absurdity of it is very apparent, for while with one statement the producer clamors about the moron condition of the public, with another he flatters it by catering to its preferences, by asking its "advice" (which he never heeds and cares nothing about).

When, by sheer accident, some brave director makes a truly beautiful picture the producer again flatters the public by press agenting the fact that "he has made an artistic picture which he is sure the public will appreciate". What he means is that he fears he has made a box-office flop and by dint of much flattery handed out to the public he hopes to make at least a FEW hundred thousands on the picture. But a beautiful picture is always appreciated by the majority of the public. All of which, of course,

greatly astonishes the producer. It seems stupid and ill bred to apologize publicly for making a well nigh per-fect picture—and yet the producers

continue to do so.

When Lubitsch made that scintillant picture, The Marriage Circle, the critics acclaimed it, but fed by the propaganda of the producers, they leavened their praise by intimating that the picture doubtless would only appeal to a few-those few who knew their "continental angle". This is amusing, inasmuch as America is made up of continentals, people in whose blood is bred an understanding of the continental view of life and love.

The Marriage Circle did not make a great deal of money-this was because it was something new in the way of a story. Most people have to acquire a taste for olives—the great American public saw the picture and made no comment; they neither condemned nor praised it, but went home and thought it over.

After thinking it over, so well did they show their appreciation of this type of story that a new school of directorship sprang into being—the school which gave us Monta Bell and Mal St. Clair and Menjou (I mention Menjou, the actor, because to him belongs so much of the credit for the finesse displayed in the direction of A Woman of Paris).

Evidently Bell and St. Clair gave the public credit for average intelligence and some little humor; they risked their jobs and made the type of pictures they enjoyed making and to-day they are hauling down big sal-

The Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer pictures featuring Lew Cody, Aileen Pringle and Norma Shearer were all made because the public showed very plainly that they appreciated sophisticated comedy, the continental type of humor as well as the un-subtle, so-

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phrase "a little over the heads of the public". The wife promptly decided that it was one of those "arty things" and they went to see Tom Mix instead—and were bored.

If you ask me who the morons are, I'd say they were not the public—but the dear producers themselves, who have invented a strange myth that has grown like a Frankenstein and threatens to engulf them.

Wasn't there a legend somewhere about killing the goose that laid the golden egg? The producers would do well to study this legend carefully and forget their own little myth.

On my desk lies the weekly news letter sent to me from the First National Studios. In it is publicity concerning Carey Wilson's production of The Private Life of Helen of Troy. Mr. Wilson plans to make a sophisticated, a different, VERY different, screen play out of the novel. He wonders (in the letter) whether the public will be "ready" for it. I say more power to Mr. Wilson. I hope it will be a big picture. Doubtless he will spend a small fortune in making it —but why kill its chances of success by allowing the old myth to rule its advance notices? If it's a good picture the public will be sure to appreciate it! And when they do, probably Mr. Wilson will be the most surprised man in all of Hollywood.

most famous but least known geniuses the world ever has had. Everyone has heard his name, but not one in a thousand can give any details of his romantic life. His biography, The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci, throws a new light on his life and the interesting times in which he lived. A great amount of very thorough research must have been necessary to the writing of this book, as it is full of things which could have been obtained in no other way.

This book does not glorify Leonardo. On the other hand, after one reads it, one wonders how da Vinci became so famous. None of the reverence that was felt for Leonardo during his life was mentioned in the book.

Da Vinci is not the one and only outstanding character in the story; there are many others who are equally prominent. The weird customs of the times also occupy a lot of space. These customs are the most interesting part of the book to me. Some of them are disgusting and revolting, but all are very interesting, and some of them are very funny.

The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci is written by Dimitri Merejkowski and is translated from the Russian by Herbert Trench. As a rule, translations detract from the story; but this one is very well done, in that the style is not as stilted as is usual in translations. These two volumes were lent to me by Edward Everett Horton. I am going to lend him my Napoleon, by Ludwig.

Among other books I read, were several stories by modern popular authors and I disliked nearly all of them. When one has a chance to read books like the three I have mentioned, there is no reason to read trash, which is all most of these modern books are.

The various producers who are making comedies from the papers are overlooking a good bet in "Harold Teen". A picture, or series of pictures, based on the various adventures of "Harold Teen" would be bound to go over big. "Harold" is official fad arbitrator for a huge following of high school students, and all his following would flock to see him on the screen.

Dear Dad:

So many people have been kind to me while I have been sick that I don't know how to thank them. In this predicament, just as when I was pinched for speeding, I turn to you first. Maybe you can express my thanks to them.

This is what I want you to thank them for. When I was first sick, I spent some days in the hospital. It was around Easter, and soon my room was full of lilies and other flowers. There were also letters, big bundles of them. Some of the letters and flowers were from people I knew personally, but a lot of them were from people I only knew on the screen. All these people, out of the kindness of

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By DONALD BEATON - The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

(During the past five months The Spectator has gained several thousand new readers. Prior to that time the editor's son conducted a department in the paper. He started it when he was fifteen years old. When producers turn out a poor picture they advance as an alibi that they made it that way to appeal to the fifteen-year-old mind of the audience. Donald's department was started in order to give us an idea of how they were appealing to at least one fifteen-year-old mind. At all times The Spectator published what he wrote exactly as he wrote it. During his long convalescence the itch to write is returning to him. He has seen no pictures, but he has read many books, and it was his own idea that he should discuss them. I hope his health will permit him to keep on writing, for I believe he made many friends among Spectator readers .-W. B.

S BOOKS are the best things in the world to pass the time, I got a lot to read while I was sick. A couple of my books were brought to me by Bill Hart, who is himself an author. He and Dad made up my mind that it would be a good thing to write a few remarks about some of the numerous literary efforts I have read.

Mr. Hart sponsored the idea of an article, so I'm going to start with one of his books, The Lighter of Flames. The story deals with a character in American history who is more famous for his desire for liberty than for his other deeds: Patrick Henry, one of the greatest orators America ever has known. The portion of Henry's life outlined in this book is in the stirring times immediately preceding the American Revolution.

The style of the author is vigorous and the story is well arranged. The reader becomes more and more absorbed until the story reaches its dramatic climax in Henry's famous "Give the liberty or give me death!" speech. The love story is also well arranged,

as the outcome of it is in doubt until the end.

In the matter of drawing characters, Mr. Hart has been very adroit. The central character, Patrick Henry, is especially well done, in that he has the sympathy of the reader at all times. By turns he is pathetic, heroic, and, in his oratory, divine. The other characters, as may be expected, are not quite as perfect as the main one, but all are well drawn and are exceptionally true to life.

The Lighter of Flames is a book which would make a very good moving picture. The story is one that could do a lot for the screen right now, as it might start a new vogue in pictures, something which would be quite welcome at present.

For yet another very interesting book I am indebted to Mr. Hart, although he did not write this one himself. The book is Riata and Spurs, written by Charlie Siringo, one of the very few old Western cowpunchers still alive. Siringo has been through some of the most hair-raising experiences I ever have read.

ences I ever have read.

Like most real Westerners, Siringo has a deep contempt for the average movie type of cowboy. Some of the illustrations in the book show cowboys dressed in clothes no self-respecting screen cowboy would ever put on. No audience would swallow such a gross deception as they would believe to have been worked on them if screen cowpunchers wore the correct clothes.

Riata and Spurs also would make a good picture. That is, some of the various adventures could be written into a complete story. The numerous and picturesque outlaws would make great character studies. Maybe some of them, such as the gentleman who shot the sheriff and then shot all the witnesses of his deed, would be a bit too rough for screen fare.

Siringo injects into his writing the spirit of the cowpuncher, something which many more famous authors have tried in vain to do.

Leonardo da Vinci is one of the

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their hearts, sat down and wrote me letters to cheer me up. To my mind that is one of the finest acts of friendship that can be performed by any-

When I came home and could have visitors, then my friends saw to it that I didn't have time to worry about being sick. The walls of my room gradually became covered with photographs, so that I always had visitors in spirit, if not in flesh. Several times actor friends, having only one day off from work, would give up a few hours of that short time in visiting me. Other friends gave up some of their summer pleasures to help me pass the time away. That was one of the finest evidences of friendship, the unselfish way my friends gave up their time to keep me cheered up.

When my birthday rolled around, the first I ever have had in bad health, it was made the best I ever have had by my wonderful set of friends. From the time I woke up in the morning until I went to sleep at night, telegrams wishing me happiness kept coming steadily. Those fine messages would have made my birthday notable, even if I hadn't had visitors all day. There were telegrams from people I have never met, but who wanted to do a kind act. More friends came to see me during the day, making it the happiest I ever have had.

Now, if you could in some way express my thanks to all these people, I would be much obliged; because I could never do it adequately myself. Even you could not do it completely, for there are not words enough in even your dictionary to express my appreciation for all that has been done for

DONALD.

where it is required? For example, where it is required: For example, the simple reply, "I don't know," may be rendered in so many different ways, each pregnant with meaning. "I dunno," "I—don't—know"! "I don't know," etc.

After all, the best title is the one that is brought into such perfect harmony with the action that it seems to be an inseparable part of it. The finest compliment I ever heard on a set of titles came from Mary Pickford. When Ernest Lubitsch asked her how she liked the titles in The Marriage Circle, which she had just viewed, she looked bewildered for an instant, then replied:

"Titles? Were there any?"

I wrote those titles. Mr. Lubitsch merely dictated them. J. R.

P. S.-Kindly correct my punctuation.

(J. R. has me wrong. I do not object to either dashes or italics. Both are necessary in presenting titles, but I contend that they should be used properly. In a Warner Brothers picture italics were used without rhyme nor reason. I said so, and as a result, J. R. seems to have jumped to the conclusion that I object to their use, even though they be used correctly. The reason that J. R. offers as an excuse for a departure from conventional punctuation in titles, I advance as an argument in favor of it. The less an audience has to help it in grasping readily the meaning of a title, the harder it is for it to understand the meaning. Therefore it should have all the help possible. No help can be greater than conventional punctuation-the kind of punctuation that the reader encounters everywhere except on the screen. The farther you depart from the system to which he is accustomed, the more difficult it is for him to grasp the meaning of a title.-W. B.)

VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

A FAN SPEAKS

Dear Sir:

As an ardent movie fan, I feel urged to express myself on the subject of your contention that it is stories and not stars that fill the theatre.

You are both right and wrong.

I assume that I am like thousands of other movie fans. Now, personally, I always go to see Thomas Meighan's pictures. I take in all of Corrinne Griffith's. Two of them, Declasse and Classified, I went to see twice on account of the sheer beauty of the closeups. (I suppose you won't read any farther after that terrible confession.)

Clive Brook, Eugene O'Brien, Renee Adoree and Blanche Sweet are other names that bring me to the box-office.

But you are perfectly right in contending that a star loses his or her box-office value when they are placed in poor stories. Richard Dix is an unfortunate sufferer in that respect. And Clara Bow, who was delightful in Dancing Mothers, Mantrap and The Plastic Age, has lost her appeal for me in the poor stories in which she has been starred this year.

ROBERT S. SHILLAKER.

TITLE PUNCTUATION

Dear Mr. Beaton:

In reading The Film Spectator I observe your frequent allusion to "proper" and to "correct" punctuation. In view of the indefinable character of your qualifiers I hope my comment may not be "improper" or my conclusions "incorrect"

When symbols were first devised by the Egyptians and Assyrians to express thought there was no punctuation whatever. It was developed much later as the necessity for better expression became manifest. In the ancient Hebrew vowels were not used and words were not even separated. It was not until the tenth century of the present era that punctuation marks were used in transcribing the old texts, and such sacreligious tampering with the word of God was

vigorously reprobated by the clergy. Fortunately no such restrictions were imposed upon profane writings, and punctuation developed to the point where Hart, Genung, Beadwell, Teall, or Husband was permitted to vex and annoy school children with it. They could impose their laws upon a helpless child but not upon the men who paid the cost of hand-set type, so commas, colons and semicolons were ruthlessly discarded, and "newspaper punctuation" supplanted "book punctuation" in popularity. Then "came the dawn" of a new literature with novel requirements—the motion picture title.

Book punctuation and newspaper punctuation are both proper and correct; but will either meet the full requirements of the screen? Punctuation of titles seems to be a matter that addresses itself peculiarly to the common sense of the writer bent on conveying his exact meaning with the fewest words and in the shortest time, and in achieving that effect all laws

should be disregarded.

Before an actor speaks a line on the stage he has rehearsed it for weeks, and with the aid of the voice and accompanying gesture he is able to render the line exactly as designed. By a convention of the screen we understand that when a printed title appears an actor is speaking. But he is invisible and silent, so the audience gets no gestures or nuances. For the moment the audience becomes the actor and must, without rehearsal and in the brief moment the title is visible, translate it with absolute accuracy. The audience is not given time to recall the gesture that immediately preceded the speech, nor to recall the speech when a gesture follows it.

Under such restrictions is not the title writer justified in resorting to any mechanical expedient that will aid the audience—dashes of varying length to show agitation, confusion or hesitation, and italics (which you also condemn) to place emphasis exactly

OH, VERY WELL

My Dear Mr. Beaton:

As a reader of your admirable publication, I wish to commend you for your staunch stand against the film producers who are attempting to op-

press the entire industry.

Not only are you correct in your assertion that they are against The Film Spectator, but I wish to inform you confidentially that they are plotting to put you out of business, along with some of the other motion picture journals. They are forbidding their help to advertise with you.

I can not reveal the source of my information, but you may rely upon it that the producers have banded to-gether to keep you from exposing

their faults.

Have courage, however. There are many who will stick with you, and the producers will lose out in the long run through their incompetence. Just hit them all the harder and their cow-ardice will eventually assert itself. In the end the public itself is going to run these men out of business.

J. B. H.

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In addition to it being an ideal stopping place for the thousands of tourists visiting Southern California yearly I know scores of prominent celebrities of the motion picture world will want to maintain permanent apartments in your institution.

I am sure it will be a hotel of which not alone Hollywood, but all of California and the entire west can well be proud, and an architectural triumph that will be famed throughout the civilized

In looking over the artistic furnishings and charming decorations I know that no expense or pains is being spared to make it a high class, distinctive institution, with every modern comfort and luxury the mind of man can conceive.

That it will be maintained on a plane to satisfy the most fastidious and exacting under your capable direction, I feel sure, from the success you have made of similar institutions in the past.

Please accept my heartiest congratulations and sincerest wishes for the new Roosevelt Hotel, as well as my thanks as a Hollywood booster, for what I believe will mark a great step in advance in the business and social life of the world's film capital.

Sincerely yours,

Sed Fraum any

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Edited by WELFORD BEATON

THE 20 Cents FILM SPECTATOR

Published In Hollywood Every Other Saturday

Vol. 4

Hollywood, California, September 17, 1927

No. 2

While the editor is away holidaying, articles for this issue have been contributed by:

JOSEPH JACKSON

F. ELY PAGET

DOROTHY HARRISON

WALTER ANTHONY

LENORE COFFEE

PAUL SCHOFIELD

TOM REID

HENRY IRVING DODGE

BENJAMIN S. KUTLER

K. C. B.

GRANT CARPENTER

TOM MIRANDA

LOUIS JACOBIN

ANOTHER LETTER TO MR. MAYER

TRINITY 1173



Bos Angeles

August 25, 1927

Mr. Louis B. Mayer, Culver City, California.

Dear Sir:

Bess Meredyth, Edward Knoblock,
Hugo Ballin, George Fitzmaurice, Frank Lloyd,
Douglas Fairbanks, D. W. Griffith, Harry Pollard,
Maurice Stiller, Jack Ford, Roland Lee, Erich
von Stroheim, Alan Crossland, William Koenig,
Al Rockett, Henry King, John Barrymore,
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standing in the picture industry, use the
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Yours sincerely,

WESTERN COSTUME COMPANY.

President.

LLB.VMS.

THE FILM SPECTATOR

EVERY OTHER SATURDAY

Published by

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The only publication conducted solely for those who THINK about motion pictures.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, SEPT. 17, 1927

SOME TELEGRAMS

Olympic Hotel,

Hollywood, Calif.

Seattle, Washington

Do you know where Welford Beaton is? If you can get in touch with him tell him that we are swamped with articles for contributors' number of Spectator and don't know what to do about it.

DOROTHY HARRISON.

Dorothy Harrison, Film Spectator, Hollywood, Calif. Seattle, Wash.

Mr. Beaton fishing near Skykomish. He swore over telephone and said to tell you to publish shortest article first, next shortest second, and so on until you have no space left, then notify other writers that their articles will appear in subsequent issues.

OLYMPIC HOTEL.

Film Spectator, Hollywood, Calif. Skykomish, Wash.

Don't bother me. Much too busy. Tell Jean Hersholt, Tom Miranda, Eddie Laemmle, Ernst Lubitsch, Doug Fairbanks, Frank Bushman, Adolphe Menjou, Jim Young and Mike Levee trout on way to them by airplane. Notify Cecil de Mille that I have copyright on miracle of turning trout into flying fish.

W. B.

The Jealous Old Cat!

Dear Brother Beaton:

Your letter of August 16th moved me to tears. I am so far behind in my work that the thought of taking a vacation is inconceivable. The thought of writing an article so that you might take a vacation is so ironical that I can hardly bear it. Suppose you finish my second volume of George Washington, keep up my weekly syndicate, and write a number of short stories that I am behind on and let me take a vacation.

Otherwise I hope you choke.

Yours with much loathing, RUPERT HUGHES.

Scenario Writing Made Easy

By JOSEPH JACKSON

HE most important step in planning a career as a scenario writer is to get a job at a large salary. It is important that the stipend be high, for unless it is, the producer will not take your efforts seriously; his attitude will always be, "How can that guy write anything good? He's only getting \$200 a week."

The next thing is to train your voice, for stories are sold by talking, not by writing. It might even be wise to take a course in elocution and acting, so that you can imbue your story with dramatic fervor as you relate it.

A liberal sprinkling of profanity gives virility and power to the telling of a drama. Thus:

A dirty, lousy — walks down a dark, narrow alley until he comes to a hole in the wall that leads to a dive. The — enters the dive and meets a dame, who is just coming out. "Where have I seen that — before?" he asks himself. Then he remembers, turns on her, mad as a — "You —! You filthy little — ! Trying to hold out on me, are you? I'll smash your — head for you!"

The technique of retailing a comedy is, of course, entirely different. The narrator should give the impression that he can hardly speak for laughing. When approaching an especially good spot, preface it with: "Jesus! This one is funny! I told it to Hy Goof this morning and he said it was the funniest gag of the year."

It is inadvisable to put fresh situations into a story, as there is no precedent for judging whether they will be effective or not. You can always justify an old one by

HEAR! HEAR!

Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!
Ye Editor's away,
Seeking relaxation,
Learning anew to play;
List to the birdies warble,
List to the whispering trees
When ye Editor goes fishin'
And takes his bloomin' ease.

Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

Each dog must have his fling:
The Poet's slipped his tether
And the muse is on the wing;
A bas the motion picture,
Vive the thought sublime
That this bum verse don't hafta
Be a cinematic rhyme.

Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

The gull on the storm doth ride,
The ships from the seven oceans
Come in with the swelling tide;
High is the gate of heaven,
Dark are the deeps below—
And the creaky escalera
Is the motion picture show.

Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

Let joy be unrefined,
For Evolution's triumph
Is the motion picture mind;
And scenes which now affront us,
When touched by genius' fire,
Will reflect in warm effulgence
The sheen of the heart's desire.

pointing to the success it had in such and such a picture.

In making a screen adaptation of a book or play always introduce important changes in the story, whether necessary or not. Unless you do, your work will not be considered "creative".

Above everything else, have confidence in yourself and your work. If your voice lets down once in the telling of a story, the producer will know that you are doubtful and he will take on the same mood. Your rendition must be a tour de force.

Ride up to the studio in a big car, driven by a chauffeur. Everybody knows that there is a direct relationship between the horse-power of the motor and the author's brain.

Turn out brilliant stories, work hard, follow these rules, and you are sure to be a success.

Metropolis

By F. ELY PAGET

IN VIEWING Metropolis one is forced to the conclusion that the Germans have an art peculiarly their own. Evidently they regard the screen as a universal vehicle of expression, which it is not; inasmuch as the stage has its limitations, so has the screen, though they are less exacting.

It is quite evident that the picture as we see it, is in an incomplete form, and yet it is too long. It is my opinion that no picture can successfully sustain the interest of the spectator if it is of inordinate length.

This picture could have been made nowhere else but in Germany.

To begin with, the central figure is a synthetic human, as in Frankenstein; or again the Golem of Prague.

But Mrs. Shelley's story and the Golem are pictured as legendary, and the glamor of the medieval atmosphere takes some of the incredibility from the theme.

Not so in Metropolis. It is so modern, it is not even contemporaneous. I think a mistake was made in showing the manufacture of the automaton in such minute detail, as it has every aspect of hocus pocus, and whatever we know or do not know, we are all fairly set in the belief that human beings will never be made by machinery, however advanced the age.

An effort to deal with fantasy from the viewpoint of uncompromising realism, must always be more or less unconvincing. In this picture, the whole episode might just as well have been omitted. Would it not have been just as possible to have got the desired effect by changing Mary's soul instead of her body, a sort of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde situation? Also it would have had the added benefit of plausibility.

The symbolic part is a bit overdone, especially the shuffling tramp of the workers, and their straining at their work. Machinery perfected as we see it here will lighten the task of the worker, rather than add to it. I tried to convince myself that it was an absolute necessity to turn the hands on the big dial by hand, but I could not get it out of the back of my mind, that if it had been an Edison machine, there would have been a wheel, or some laborsaving gadget to turn them.

This, and many other effects may be charged to the Teutonic sense of the theatrical which ruins much of their screen work. The main fault of the picture, however, lies in the story. It is too impersonal. We get no intimate insight into the lives of the characters. Even the love of Masterman for his son is but lightly touched on, till his father sees him in danger of death. The home of the discharged clerk, or the family life of No. 7, for instance, would have added human touches.

The trouble is, the whole thing is done on too stupendous a scale, making it impossible to inject intimate details of the many characters. When we have said all this, we have said all on the con side. Technically, and photographically, the picture is outstanding, and gives evidence that many brains have gone to its construction. The meticulous care given to casting type is marvelous, when you discover that every perfect type is also a competent artist. Brigitte Helm, being the only woman, is naturally pre-eminent, and one wonders how the Germans can introduce a leading woman in every big picture, who, though practically unknown to the world at large, proves to be a sensation. It would be hard to duplicate the remarkable versatility shown by the actress.

The picture has evidently been ruthlessly slashed, and the cutting might have been better, as it is visible in spots where eliminations have been made in scenes.

There are faults in tempo. Froelich, evidently of the Fairbanks school, moves far too swiftly. While the picture ranks as a great achievement, one feels that one such picture in a decade is sufficient. Anyhow, it is too good a picture to have the Paramount brand slapped on it.

The Motion Picture—a Composite Art

By WALTER ANTHONY

HEN a composer finds a symphony adrift in his system, bumping about and blocking the regular traffic of his thoughts, there's nothing to prevent him getting rid of it intact. Every thought and shade of thought; every dissonance and polyphonic pattern will be transcribed, printed and played as it was intended. If the performance be not so fine as the creator's concept, there is always access to the printed page and justification for the composer.

The painter stands in much the same relation to his art, there being nothing to prevent him from exposing his vision if he command paint, brushes and canvas, technic being presupposed. So it is with the sculptor and likewise even with the novelist. The playwright, too, can order his characters about to suit himself; the mechanical processes involved are of secondary importance and commanded with comparative ease.

But who shall write a motion picture play? Through how many hands does the initial conception pass before it reaches the screen? Douglas Fairbanks knows. He was the first to use the phrase, "building a picture", instead of "writing a picture". Pictures are not written. They are manufactured.

One of the most stupid, anomalous and common expressions in our business is that which relates to the makers of scenario product, as writers. Not a very large percentage of them are capable of writing at all, in the real sense of the word. When they are best and most effective they are not "writers", but makers of stories. If it were otherwise the picture industry would not flourish, since it is a fact that the best "writers" are not engaged in it. Indeed, the very qualities that give a writer

distinction are qualities undesirable in a picture, except,

perhaps, in the title writer.

What became of Barrie's delicious comedy, The Admirable Crichton? What became of Mark Twain's satire, The Connecticut Yankee? What becomes of any work which, between covers, is essentially literary? Barrie's own opinion of what becomes of his work when put on the screen, is summed up by him neatly in his comment on the change made in the title of his play, The Admirable Crichton, to Male and Female. He said, with a chuckle up his sleeve, "I would have used it myself, if I had been capable of thinking it."

Too many elements are at work in a motion picture to render it thinkable as a one-man job. Any element prominent in the finished product, from photography to titles is important enough to modify it and give it flavor and feeling remote, if not contrary, to the original con-

cept in the script.

Is not a motion picture the illustration of one form of art struggling through the medium of another, and an alien art? I mean, a motion picture is, let us say, primarily a drama; a drama muted. It is a play seeking expression through the medium of another art-photography. The writer who would aspire to the unique dignity of sole authorship of motion pictures would perforce be a versatile genius of such extensive gifts as never yet have been the endowment of any one man. The novelist thinks his story in terms of words, but the scenario writer does not, if he's worth the price they pay him. He thinks his story in terms of these images, which can not reach the screen through the genius of any one man. Even in the "small" details of casting I have seen a story, originally conceived in one spirit, come forth with an entirely different one, due merely to the exigencies of casting. A blonde, Nordic type was substituted for a heroine of the brunette, Mediterranean type, with the result that the entire story was flavored with a spirit foreign to the original idea. Every man who touches the picture in any of its important phases will add to it, automatically and unwittingly, something of himself, and this is true from the prop man up.

Exigencies of booking are also in the way of individualism in picture-making. A picture to be popular must address itself to a ready-made audience through the more or less accurate observations on audiences, made by exhibitors. Standardization then sets in and can not be ignored because a picture is not really a picture until it has been seen, any more than a sound is really a sound until it is heard.

Moving Pictures as a Symphonic Form

By LENORE J. COFFEE

THE symphony as a musical form offers a tremendous field of study to the men and women engaged in the creative and interpretive departments of moving pictures. There is a significant similarity between them; the composer represents the author, the musicians the actors and the conductor the director; perhaps we might even say the baton becomes the megaphone. Moving pictures are essentially a symphonic form in the welding of the creative work of the author, and the performances of the actors, which are both interpretive and creative, into a beautiful and harmonious whole under the hand of

the director. Just as no symphony can be greater than its conductor, so can no moving picture be greater than its director

And the similarity goes even further. You could almost cast a picture, selecting your actors to correspond to the musical instruments; or rather to correspond to the note they contribute to the orchestration. The violins and cellos are your love motif, romance and pathos; the brasses and wood-winds are conflict and represent the more powerful structure; the flutes and clarinets, lightness and coquetry; and the instruments of percussion, such as tympani, cymbals, celesta, etc., supply the elements—rain and storm, sunshine and light. And the magnificent sweep and beauty of the full orchestra corresponds to the great climax of the picture.

Taking these same elements, we can determine what

"Si La Jeunnesse Savait, Si La Viellesse Pouvait!"

By LOWELL C. FROST

Youth Looks on Age:

I

The Old Man's losing out a bit, you say? Oh, yes, he's getting slow-too old to put The big scenes over swinging. But he knows His stuff. Now, don't you fool yourself; he knows! For instance take the other day: that scene "The Mine's Mouth"—where the mother sees her son. He's dying-suffocated-having saved The superintendent's daughter. (A damned rotten, Mushy scene, of course!) Well, the old lady, She couldn't shed a tear or look a thing. God knows I sweat a pint of blood; the scene Dropped like a coil of lead pipe. Hell's bells! I made her do it half-a-dozen times, And showed her how, and gave her all I had: No use! She couldn't seem to make it live. Well,

The Old Man ambled up, took in the show... He smiled. "Get ready," said he, quiet-like, Gave Bill the high sign, said a few low words To the old lady. I was standing by, And I heard what he said:

"You had a baby . . .

Once? One night his small warm hands
Grew cold . . . and colder . . . 'till you were . . . alone.
This boy here is your baby . . . for to-night—
Go . . . look at him. Remember . . ."
She walked across the set where the boy lay:
My God! the look those words had put into
Her eyes!

That scene went over big.

Of course, the Old Man's losing all his pep.... But . . . there's a lot he knows I'd give the world for!

TT

Knowledge of men, knowledge of sky and earth— How barren! And, far-reaching in my brain, Thoughts, plans, desires, strive for birth

And find the power . . . lacking. Yet, in truth, What should it profit me, what should I gain

Were I to sacrifice for the blind urge of youth, Knowledge of men, knowledge of sky and earth? the opening shall be; what note shall we strike? Shall we start with the strong brasses, representing the conflict of our story, and so suggest the nature of our climax? Or shall we begin with the delicate strains of the violins, establishing the love motif and romantic element? Or, again, shall we begin disarmingly with gaiety of the flutes deepening with sudden violence to the unexpected strength of the brasses with the piercing sweetness of the violins crying to be heard, and thus produce the most poignantly dramatic effect—the eternal conflict between love and violence, between delicacy and brute power? In a moving picture, as in a symphony, you have all the elements to work with and can strike what notes you please to begin with and to build to, but, in both forms, the WHOLE must be harmonious and related.

This affinity extends even to fundamental structure. A symphony falls into movements as a play does into acts and a moving picture into sequences:

The first movement of a symphony is the most intellectual movement—in a moving picture the beginning lays the foundation of the story, explains the characters and introduces the mental element.

The second movement of the symphony is the romantic or emotional movement—in a moving picture it is the development of the love story, enlisting the sympathy and emotions of the audience.

The third movement of a symphony is called the popular movement. Does this correspond, by any chance, to what we mean when we supply the element called "box-office"?

And then the Finale. In the early symphonies this was always jovial. In our own moving pictures which are still in an early form, is not this our somewhat inevitable "happy ending"? The analysis of the symphony further states that Beethoven, the great master of this form, broke away from the tradition of an unalterably jovial Finale and gave to it a broader and more ambitious character. This is surely what those masters among us are now trying to give to that critical portion of a moving picture—the Finale, or end.

I feel that so much more could be said, and said so much better, by someone who is really a musician, about the striking relationship between these two great forms—the symphony and the moving picture. Volumes could be written alone on the terrific importance of tempo to both mediums. A symphony played with largo in place of presto—allegretto in place of adagio—would be a hideous nightmare. The same thing occurs in a moving picture when a scene or sequence is directed in the wrong tempo.

I hope it is a little significant that the great symphony concerts for the people held in the Hollywood Bowl should have reached such fine development here in the heart of moving pictures which, in their ideal state, should be great symphonies of beauty and form and movement.

Yesterday, To-day and To-morrow

By DOROTHY HARRISON Secretary to The Spectator Editor

Going back in thought to the old days in pictures and comparing them with the pictures of the present day, what do we find? Improvements made by money, such as lavishness in production, but how about

the artistic side of the question? Compare some of the super-productions of ten years ago, for instance, with the super-production of to-day and you will find that the artistic development has not been proportionate with the passage of time. Photography and screen architecture have moved forward a very long way, for the reason that the men who are engaged in those crafts think primarily of their work and its advancement, and secondarily of themselves, and like all pioneers, they penetrate further and further and build and beautify until the results of their research and toil are beginning to make themselves apparent.

The photographer and the technician find far more freedom in their work than do the writers, directors and actors, because their work, being highly specialized in a different way and requiring as it does intricate mechanical knowledge, does not brook the same interference. But the people who prepare the stories, direct and act in them are so largely ordered by minds that are trained to a certain point (which is not quite far enough), that they simply do not have a chance to do themselves justice. Studio heads are largely responsible for this state among the first two of this group, but in the case of the actors the blame is divided between the studio heads and the public.

Unfortunately, a great many people do not realize the extent of the public's sin. Think of some of our most famous stars of ten years ago. What are they doing now? Either the same thing—by force—or else they are choked to death in the effort to struggle ahead to something of which they know themselves to be capable, but which their public refuses to accept because they are not running "true to type". "Type" is a word which has become the curse of the industry and, even now, is holding down several of our finest actors. A few have managed to break the yoke and struggle free, like Gloria Swanson, Dorothy Gish, Richard Dix and Syd Chaplin, to name a small percentage, while others have either become disheartened and left the screen, been thrust further down the scale or taken up other lines of work altogether.

In condemnation of the public, consider the case of Mary Pickford, one of the world's greatest dramatic actresses, who is forced to go on playing child parts when she has the power to stir the world as it seldom has been stirred—if only her public would let her. Twice she has tried to pave the way to the heights she can scale so easily, but the public has set its face solidly against her and said, in effect, "No, she must be a child always. We will not help her to do what she wants to do and feels she can do; she must please us if she breaks her heart doing so!"

Then there are other people who are obliged to run always along the same road, like Louise Dresser and Belle Bennett. Because Miss Dresser made The Goose Woman and Miss Bennett Stella Dallas, they have to repeat those characterizations over and over again. Think of Miss Dresser in the sequence of The Goose Woman when she reverts to the opera singer, and then magnify that into a part running through an entire picture, without any drabness. Why shouldn't she be allowed to do it?

At the present time we have another great actress sojourning in our midst—Lucille La Verne. Think back to her work in Orphans of the Storm and other pictures. Yet the producers will probably let her finish her run of

Sun Up and succumb once more to the blandishments of London for another two years' run before they realize that she was here and that it is too late. And so on. The cases are too numerous to mention.

But let us hope that in the future, to the three unities of time, place and action, will be added a fourth—unity of purpose, with entire co-operation between the industry and the public. In that way, with everybody working for its highest aims, the screen can become the greatest art the world ever has known.

Silk Purses and Sow's Ears!

By PAUL SCHOFIELD

PROPHET is not without honor, save in his own country."

The status of the original story, written directly for the screen by a photoplaywright of admitted experience and accomplishment, proves it.

WHY—do producers pay a huge sum for a title, a famous novel or a Broadway play, whether a success or not; ask a scenario writer in whom they have confidence and whom they pay from ten to twenty thousand dollars to "adapt" it, which means writing from half to an entire original story; invent business; create means of characterization; insert "comedy relief"; in other words, make a silk purse out of a sow's ear; and then refuse to give serious consideration to an original story written by the same photoplaywright?

WHY—when they do condescend to consider such a story, tailored to order for a director or a star by a writer who knows his business, do they grudgingly offer him from ten to twenty-five per cent. for his silk purse what they are willing and eager to pay him for his work on the sow's ear?

WHY—do producers and supervisors piously murmur that the future of the screen lies in the development of photoplaywrights who can furnish the same originality and skill that creates the great stage successes—and then either refuse to consider or offer a ridiculous price for the work of photoplaywrights already developed and acknowledged craftsmen?

WHY—I ask these solemn gentlemen, should such trained writers gamble time for which these producers and supervisors are willing to pay a great deal of money, in the heart-breaking speculation of writing original material for the screen, only to see their work overlooked or underpaid? The answer is that they should not and do not—and will not, until producers reward the creation of such material sufficiently generously to stimulate its creation.

WHY—should not the men who, good business men though they are, know nothing of stories, set themselves as a sullen barrier against the presentation on the screen of original material created expressly for the screen by men who know story construction and dramatic values? Let me ask them how many of the great stage successes listed in Mr. Mantle's "Best Plays", from 1919 to 1926, have been "adapted"? Do they know?

WHY—do men titularly credited with "Super Vision" not realize that the alteration and emasculation of a novel which has run into sales of millions of copies, and its altered presentation on the screen, arouse only resentment and disappointment in the minds of the millions

familiar with the story—create derision of the business we all wish to command respect? One reason Beau Geste was universally acclaimed was because it was transcribed to the screen with absolute fidelity to the book with which millions were familiar; they were not disappointed, nor were they irritated. Having loved the novel—they were not permitted to deny the picture! But while Seventh Heavens and Beau Gestes are in themselves silk purses, ask any harrassed scenario editor or supervisor, feverishly hunting for material, how many of them there are available!

Filet is tenderloin—but tripe is tripe; and to buy tripe, "adapt" it and force it down the public throat is to make the public sore. And if the producer is fortunate enough to command the services of a scenario writer clever enough to "adapt" tripe into a dish that can pass even as flank steak—he should encourage that photoplaywright to give him some original material.

There is more money thrown away-and more colossal ignorance displayed in the acquisition and preparation of material for the screen than in any other one department of the business. The men in this business who know stories; who know dramatic construction and characterization; who are capable of furnishing, either from their own brains or by selection of good material, the silk purses that the business needs, are too busy trying to "adapt" sow's ears purchased by thirty-five dollar a week readers, after the approval of two hundred thousand dollar a year producers and supervisors. If the writer of this article, or any other writer in Hollywood, had submitted to certain producers in the picture business original manuscripts of Variety or The Last Laugh, he would have been strictured for wasting their valuable time and imposing on his acquaintance with them.

Some day, like the stage, the screen is going to have to rely upon material written expressly for it by writers of reputation as photoplaywrights, for the bulk of its entertainment. And like almost all real reforms, it will have to come of necessity, and not from any disposition on the part of present motion picture executives to bring it about.

Lend Me Thy Best Ear, Oh, Beaton!

By TOM REED

HEN Welford Beaton asked me to compile some bright sayings for The Spectator I was pleased. But when he mentioned in a note that I might take issue with him about something or other, so that a better article would be forthcoming, I was alarmed. "Remember," I counseled myself, "as editor of the paper, the protagonist of the comma and the period always has the last word and I had best be careful or have a measure of dashes and exclamation points shied at my beetling brow." But then I thought of a simple way out. I decided to write a sentence to this effect, "If Welford replies to my effort all bets are off. The article is null and void and I was only fooling." So if you see a paragraph in rebuttal, realize that I, a healthy male, have been taken advantage of. And in this day and age you can't do that.

Welford has a vote of thanks coming to him. He has awakened the producers. Now they look twice at screen titles, examine them closely for mistakes, and pass them fearfully. They dislike the raps of the editors who now follow the lead of the Beaton.

But Welford is wrong. (My typewriter trembles.) He has taken too much on his shoulders. It is true that the elementary rules of punctuation should be followed rigidly. But after they are observed, it is up to the titler to lay stress as he sees fit. Examine Balzac and then read Hugo. To hop to the other edge of the world, peruse Laotze. Where, pray tell me, do you find set rules for punctuation? Drama or comedy is emphasized as the author wills. On the screen the dash is a godsend. (Once again, I shake in my Innes slippers.) When twenty words are put into an opening title, a dash or two spaces them so that every reader may get the writer's thought more easily. You'll find strings of periods in Anatole France. And dashes-you'll find them accentuating points in everything that James Branch Cabell ever wrote, and many regard him as a great stylist. Take my title which opens Conrad Veidt's first American starring picture, A Man's Past, which I titled for Universal:

Mont Noir — bleak mountain island! They say when the sun goes down, its black shadow may still be seen far out on the Mediterranean.

The dashes after the name of the island make the audience pause just long enough. And a pause is important, for later on the name "Mont Noir" is extremely significant. A comma, instead of the dashes, would not give the tempo I strove for. Dashes are primarily parenthetical, but they do give the eye a chance on the screen. They should mark a suspension of the sense, a faltering in speech, a change of construction, or a turn of thought. And one must give the mind a chance to follow the thought, mustn't one?

Enough of that. Now to the wisecrack. In the event that some producer or director shoots first in the next year so so, never let it be said that this screen title writer ever employed the typical wisecrack. To my esteemed colleague, Walter Anthony, must go the credit for calling to my attention the menace of the common laugh of the moment. To-day the "you can't do that's" and the "why did you bring that up's" are being thrown into comedy spots in every studio in the industry. The other evening I caught a title at a local theatre which read something like this: "I got them in a little Spanish town. 'Twas on a night like this." Stony silence welcomed the caption. It might as well have read, "every day in every way." Why don't the directors realize that real humor never dies? Gags are but flashes in the pan. "Two Black Crow" laughs will soon be relegated to the limbo of "Yes, we have no bananas."

Take up a volume of "Innocents Abroad" and between the dashes, laugh at the humor of America's greatest writer, Mark Twain, the man who unofficially conquered the world for America. Realize in his "Following the Equator" or "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog" that the humor which pleases you was written some time ago, before the age of the wisecrack. Real humor is whimsical—sometimes pointed. And the picture producers can't have their current releases re-titled every few months, can they? The answer is simple. William A. Seiter, a perspicacious director if there ever was one, has the right idea. When I undertook the titling of Out All Night, a Reginald Denny starring vehicle, he looked me square in the eye and threatened instant annihilation should I prepare a topical wheeze. The result (if I do chortle so

myself) was pleasing. No time-worn gags, but humor which was guaranteed not to rip, tear, rust or shrink. And which, furthermore, will be pleasing as long as Universal cares to exhibit the picture.

And now, Welford Beaton, do your worst. Realize that the dash has not recently been adopted by ye penman. Go on, have your old vacation, and as soon as you are rested dash back to us, for, dash my eye, the screen is at a period when it needs a guy with plenty of dash — like you.

The Big Idea

By HENRY IRVING DODGE Author of several well known books.

AM convinced that the writer man is the most important factor in the motion picture industry to-day—provided he have an idea back of his story.

George M. Cohan, the shrewdest play producer in America. once told me: "It doesn't matter how much you make your audience laugh and applaud, if you don't give them something to talk about when the show's over or at the breakfast table next morning, your play's a failure."

A good story is apt to mean good box-office receipts.

A good story plus an idea is sure to mean big boxoffice receipts.

For by your worth-while story you intrigue, hold the interest; by your big idea you make people talk—and it's talk, and talk alone, that sends people to the show.

No matter how much paid advertising or free publicity you put into the exploitation of your picture or play, unless you get people to talk about it it's a failure. For, remember, talk is the most effective free publicity known.

Also I have found that a big idea back of one's story will facilitate, if it does not actually produce, a vast deal of printer's ink publicity. Reporters, editors and paragraphists all love to dilate upon a big idea. They may approve or disagree or even poke fun at your idea. But the great thing is, they write about it. And that again promotes talk and talk manifests itself in your box-office. It's inevitable.

And so I have made it a point always to have an idea back of every story that I write. In Skinner's Dress Suit, Skinner's Big Idea, Skinner Makes It Fashionable, The Yellow Dog, and The Thirteenth Juror—which Universal has just produced—I wrote as good a story as I was capable of concocting, and always based it on what I believed to be a big idea.

In writing Skinner's Dress Suit I selected an intriguing theme—the relation of good appearance to prosperity. Everybody wants to be successful—and there you are.

Skinner's Big Idea was based on the absurd practice prevalent of dismissing men of middle-age, at the highest point of their efficiency, simply because they were nearing the fifty line. Skinner Makes It Fashionable showed how to reduce the high cost of living and at the same time promote health and beauty. The Thirteenth Juror is an argument against circumstantial evidence.

But it was essential, in each case, that the story in itself be gripping. And I've always found it easier to write a story based on an idea than a mere plot story. The reason is obvious. A most valuable quality in a story, I have found, more gripping even than the element of love, is the element of the weird.

There are many directors who seem to think that there must be constant physical movement on the screen to produce the desired effect, such as running up and down stairs or drawing an automatic or fist-fighting or safe-breaking, on every possible occasion. Movement will quite notoriously attract a small chicken—I don't mean in the slang sense. The little creature will follow anything that moves, which is why any old, motherly duck may so easily adopt it.

But how much more effective it is to hold a good situation without movement. The great Salvini used, at times, to hold his audience in the most intense grip, using his eyes alone—no speech, no movement of the body—and for inconceivable periods.

Edward Laemmle, who directed The Thirteenth Juror, showed rare grasp and appreciation in so directing Francis X. Bushman that that actor held one scene for several hundred feet of film by suggestive facial work alone. During this scene the audience actually sat on the edge of its seats, so gripped and held was it. Laemmle visualized the situation just as I had visualized it when I wrote the story.

I never could understand why, when a story is in itself a logical, an inevitable succession of gripping scenes and situations, it should not be put on the screen as the author has conceived it. Why throw in extraneous things which only divert attention and weaken the grip of your plot on your audience; or by reversing the order of, or leaving out, absolutely relevant circumstances, throw the whole thing out of gear?

I have seen very many pictures—I am an indefatigable "fan"—that might have been improved a hundred per cent. if the writer had been consulted about the scenario. He could have picked out a lot of glaring defects, and filled up or bridged a lot of plot-holes—and plot-holes are often fatal.

I have observed that to-day many film-tired persons resent things in the pictures—inconsistencies—that they don't understand. They are puzzled by their very existence and are often offended and resentful.

Some time ago Mr. Griffith urged writer-men to master the technic of the screen, commenting that this was a new medium of expression. For that matter, so is the radio a new medium of expression. The old troubadours had a medium all their own.

But it doesn't matter how many mediums there are, the basic principle of story telling underlies them all. And that principle is: intrigue, intrigue, intrigue—keep on intriguing from beginning to end. And, so far as I know, the writer-man is the only master of that art. It's his trade, his business.

Griffith would more profitably urge his adaptors, scenarists and directors to learn the fundamentals of story telling. That's the most vital need of pictures to-day.

Human Characterizations

By BENJAMIN S. KUTLER

THE story telling aspects of motion pictures to-day are rapidly approaching the era of humanity. Stories containing delicately drawn human characters are proving more and more each day to be the nucleus around which prosperous studios producing successful pictures are revolving.

In the long ago, which is after all but very recently as the past ages of picture-making are counted, the plot, and in reality the many complex and interwoven plots within plots, were the sole things that counted. It was a well known fact in those days, that if one in the audience stopped to bat an eyelash, he would necessarily miss one of the many cruxes or some one of the great many anticlimaxes. To carefully build any character in an endeavor to make that character seem real and human was entirely out of the question. The producers' cry forever was, "Plots . . . plots! . . . plots!!"

No one seemed to realize that simple human tales into which were woven the various vicissitudes that some one character or characters experienced would produce finished screen material of great entertainment value. To even mention such productions as having box-office value and appeal seemed insane.

For years I have championed the idea of human characterizations and always contended that plentifully buried within such thoughts were many ideas for stories, the names of which would become household words of familiar allusion, and the box-office results of which would astound the most skeptical.

Granted that the story and scenario are entirely acceptable, there is no denying the fact, however, that to produce such stories one great and pressing need lies in procuring very capable character actors and actresses as well as directors.

Only recently we have had come to us such sterling productions as Alias the Deacon, The Last Laugh, Mr. Wu, His People, and The Way of All Flesh. Instantly a mental association is formed between the above productions and

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8152 SUNSET BOULEVARD GLADSTONE 6121 the following peerless character stars: Jean Hersholt, Emil Jannings, Lon Chaney, and Rudolph Schildkraut.

In my last story, the working title of which is The Braggart, soon to be produced by Universal starring Jean Hersholt, I have endeavored not to sacrifice plot entirely at the expense of human characterization, or vice versa. While the producers found this particular plot quite acceptable, it gave me great personal satisfaction to note the fact that they realized the plot itself became greatly enhanced because the paramount person in the story was characterized humanly and that only if his mode of living, habits and past life were shown as befitting him, then, and in that event only, would the future sequences of his life in the story upon the screen be entirely acceptable to any audience. Fortunately, for the concern and success of this particular production, it will serve as a starring vehicle for Jean Hersholt, who will be directed by Ted Sloman.

I venture to say that if scenarios containing the stories of The Last Laugh or The Way of All Flesh had been submitted to producers only a short while ago, the writers of such tales would have been laughed at and such authors would have been quite at a loss to answer the screaming producers' "Where is the plot?"

Some of our greatest literary masters such as Poe, Zola, Balzac, Stevenson and others, have given to the world at times little gems that were real and human and utterly devoid of all such plot and counter-plot, and we know that such stories exist.

But we are learning and quickly approaching the stage when true, real and human drawing of any and all of the various characters in our stories will be considered of the utmost importance in the field of the coming motion picture.

In the future when we speak of plot in a scenario, we shall not as a rule refer to some of the more complex plots. A story having but little plot, but being really human, and surrounded with expertly drawn characterizations, will not mean that the story lacks strength. A simple plot may be very strong as, for instance, in Enoch Arden. It may be said, in passing, that the highest art in the treatment of a story is that which presents its fullest possibilities in the simplest ways. Story telling, like architecture, is essentially structural, and nothing is more structural than the art of characterization. The story teller or the architect who departs from the structural idea is going the way that will eventually lead to error and oblivion.

Intricacy of plot will not be entirely sought after or greatly desired very soon. Finely drawn characterizations certainly do involve the elements of curiosity, suspense, surprise and all the other varying phases necessary to make up the continuity and tensity of interest of human existence.

Nearly everyone, I imagine, can write intricate-plot scenarios. But in character drawing, another sort of mental equipment is needed.

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When the motion picture made its debut in the entertainment field, scenario writing came to us just like spontaneous combustion; it "just happened". But under modern conditions it is both a science and an art. Other things being equal, the most successful scenario writers of the future will be the ones who devote themselves most assiduously to the art of human characterizations. And that art is rather difficult.

But there is an old Latin proverb which is very good for us all: "Laborando Proficies." It means, "By laboring you become proficient," or more simply, "Work tells."

This Marco and Hellman Stuff

By K. C. B.

DON'T know if it is within the province of one who is asked to contribute to the "Contributors' Number" of The Spectator to air one's views on the presentation of picture theatre programs, but inasmuch as I don't know anything about the making of pictures, but do know a whole lot about what I like when I go to a picture show, I'm going to take a chance and say whatever I want to say.

Why is it then, when there is a picture I want to see and it is playing at a big house, and if I don't get there just at the moment the picture begins, that, in order to see it, I must sit through a period of antics by some orchestra leader, and in some of the houses be compelled also to sit through these Marco and Hellman or somebody and Marco or Marco and somebody, prologues or epilogues or whatever they are?

And then, in order to give all of this extra show, and to make a turn over every two hours or whatever it is, they take the news reel, which in my opinion is one of the greatest picture show attractions, and cut it down to almost nothing at all!

There are four in our family and we are pretty consistent motion picture goers. Three of us are most positive in our unwillingness to sit through these Marco and Hellman things. The other doesn't mind it so much if there's a good picture. And we all of us know the houses where they run the news reel in what I assume is its complete form. And these are all little houses, neighborhood houses. Therefore, when we have agreed that we are going to a picture show we find the Hollywood Citizen and choose the picture we want to see and go and see it. Sometimes we have to wait through many weeks for the big pictures to come, but they finally get to us.



If I had some money I was willing to risk—for I'll agree it might be a risk—I would build myself a comfortable little theatre, open it along about noon every day, charge a straight twenty-five cents admission, get all the news reel stuff I could get, the best two-reel comedies I could buy, and whatever short features there are in the market, or what have you, for a man or woman who doesn't want to be bored, and run one show every hour until closing time.

If there were such a theatre within reasonable distance of my home there would not be a week in which they wouldn't get a dollar from me. And I can imagine that no end of persons, in addition to those who would attend only such a theatre as I have described, would drop into my theatre before or after seeing a performance at another theatre. One thing I do know, and that is that there are many thousands of us in every community to whom the news reel has a great appeal.

However, I don't want anyone to get the idea that I don't know there are lots of persons who like these Marco and Hellman things, and the dancing and singing orchestra leaders. Even I, who am hollering my head off about them, would stand for 'most anything to hear Eddie Peabody play his banjo. I'd even say I liked his clothes. But Eddie is a rarity. And I don't say that these prologues, or epilogues, or whatever they are, aren't well done. Of my own knowledge I know that some of them are. But when I go to a motion picture theatre, I go to see motion pictures, and I don't want that things I like shall be sacrificed to permit a leaping leader to leap or a lot of girls to stand around on movable scenery.

And now, with this opportunity that has been given me to air my views to the readers of The Spectator, I want to ask if somebody won't go out and find a good, sensible looking girl—or anyway, a sensible looking girl—who isn't pretty or isn't ugly, but just a plain, ordinary girl, like most of our sisters and daughters, a girl whose face expresses possession of intelligence instead of being just beautiful. And then I'd ask that they make of her a star, so that when she said brilliant or clever things, or did brilliant or clever things, I could believe her, something I am so often unable to do with most of our dumb but beautiful stars. I don't mean to say that all of our stars are dumb, because I know they're not, but when they are selected primarily for their beauty it must follow that the dumb ones get in along with the bright ones.

I have no idea what amount of copy the editor of The Spectator wants from me. Not knowing anything about the making of pictures and never having tried to run a picture theatre, I don't know much about them and so could go on writing for an indefinite period. It's so easy to just go rambling on, not caring whether it makes sense or not and knowing that those who agree with me will say, "yah," and those who don't will say "applesauce."

Oh, yes! I'd almost forgotten that once on a time, a few years ago, I did lend my services to the making of motion pictures. I titled several. I like to brag about the fact that I cut and titled the government's great war pictures, America's Answer, and Under Four Flags. I likewise titled several other pictures, of studio manufacture. I quit when a young man of swarthy countenance who said "I seen" and "you done it", started to argue with me about some of the titles I had written. And inasmuch as

THIS IS GOOD

T HAS been with keen interest that I read the "Warning" given to The Film Spectator readers against paying any attention to the Runyadha, Ltd., articles.

Paradoxically I agree with most of what was contained in the "Warning".

As they said I have "Not the nerve to come out and say anything which an insurance representative can contradict."

That is true. I not only have not the nerve, but I have no desire, and I am glad that they admit, even if it was unintentional, that an insurance representative can not contradict anything I have said.

In my last article I said, "Prove that Life Insurance as an investment is the bunk, and you are a TWISTER. Well, the "Warning" admits this. Nevertheless, Life Insurance as an investment is the bunk.

Lest, however, there might be any doubt in the minds of my readers, I would like to say that the term "Twisting" is defined by the law of June the 7th, 1915; Stats. 1915 p. 1272, as follows in part:

"No insurance company, association, or society, officer, director, agent, solicitor or broker, or any person, firm, association or corporation shall make any misrepresentation, oral, written or otherwise, to any person for the purpose of inducing or tending to induce such person to take out a policy of insurance, or for the purpose of inducing or tending to induce a policyholder in any company to lapse, forfeit or surrender his insurance therein, or to refuse to accept a policy issued upon an application therefor, and to take out a policy of insurance in any other company."

The violation of the above law is subject to a penalty of six months in prison, and I want to announce publicly now, that if any insurance company will prosecute me for the violation of this law, I will pay the expenses win or lose.

To this I want to add just one more statement, that there is hardly a policy written, sold, or issued to-day by any insurance company that is not in violation of this law, and that practically every policy is misleading, and in its general tenor misrepresentative of the actual facts; and it should long since have been made impossible for the companies to advertise, sell or accept money for the payment of 99% of the policies now being carried by the intelligent (?) American public, who are either too lazy to inquire, or to stupid to find out for themselves where the bunk is, and every policy combining investment with insurance is merely bunk, as shown in the previous article under the title of "No Wonder the Horses Laugh."

This is my answer to the companies' "Warning". Now if they mean what they say, let them prosecute me.

I again repeat what was said in all previous articles.

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I have no insurance to sell. It costs nothing to find out the truth of what I say, and I will be glad to answer in the future as I have done in the past, any inquiries addressed c/o The Film Spectator.

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he had a regular job, and I was getting just so much a title, I figured the best thing I could do was to ask for my hat. It was a straw hat and only the middle of May. Perhaps I acted unwisely, because the young man is now far advanced in the motion picture business. He seen it was a good thing and he stayed with it while I done a Nazimova and walked out. But here I am, chattering along about myself, and it's a warm afternoon and I don't get any pay for this and why should I go on and on?

P. S.—I've just remembered. It's Fanchon and Marco, not Marco and Hellman.

The Guild and the Producers

By GRANT CARPENTER

President of the Screen Writers' Guild of the Authors' League of America

THE Screen Writers' Guild of the Authors' League of America has requested the Association of Motion Picture Producers to negotiate such equitable standard contracts for staff and free lance writers as may be deemed satisfactory by both writers and producers. The need is so evident and the request so reasonable that the Writers' Branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has added its request to that of the Guild. If the producers had ever taken the trouble to investigate the purposes of the Guild and the effect of equitable contracts upon motion picture production the request would have come from the producers.

The producers, without the slightest reason beyond the suspicion and distrust with which employers usually view any organization of employees, have regarded the Guild as some sort of a labor union, hostile in intent and predatory in character. Its purposes as defined by its Constitution are: To procure adequate copyright legislation for the protection of literary compositions; to combat censorship; to protect the rights and property of its members and to promote their interests and welfare by procuring a greater measure of cooperation between its members and producers to insure equitable and sympathetic treatment and consideration; by procuring for writers adequate credit; by helping its members to secure adequate compensation and recognition, and by establishing and enforcing a code of professional ethics.

If its Constitution had been dictated by a thoughtful and conscientious producer it is inconceivable that it would have been framed otherwise. And in the six years of its existence no producer can point to a single instance in which it has departed in the slightest degree from its avowed purposes. It could not do so without coming into direct conflict with its parent organization, the Authors' League of America, and sacrificing its position as one of the component parts of the most influential literary organization in the whole world to-day. Any activity not in strict conformity with its declared policy and purposes would inevitably generate the germs of its own destruction

The only clause in the Guild's Constitution that might be viewed with suspicion by a producer is that relating to adequate compensation and recognition. That can not possibly mean price fixing, for the salaries of writers range from \$100 to \$3,000 a week, and the price of continuities from \$300 to \$25,000; and any attempt to equalize or regulate the wage scale or classify writers would

instantly disrupt the organization. It means exactly what it says—adequate compensation and recognition for services rendered. It was designed to protect the writer against trick contracts under which he might be compelled to lie idle for months without pay.

Nor does the clause threaten an attempt to increase compensation by imposing a closed shop on the producer. The writer harbors no fears of competition. He knows that able writers have always been and always will be too few, and that fear of competition is a confession of incompetency. The efforts of the Guild to draw all screen writers into its organization are prompted by the purposes expressed in its Constitution, feeling assured that the fulfillment of those purposes will benefit the industry generally and work injury to none. Unethical practices by any writer reflect upon the craft as a whole, and there

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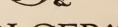
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is no method of checking them except by bringing all of the writers within the control of its regulations.

There are no differences between the producer and the writer not attributable solely to lack of understanding. The producer wants able and conscientious writers and is willing to pay the price they demand. The writer is eager for an opportunity to produce the best possible work and enhance the demand for his services. But, under existing conditions, the producer can not possibly gauge the capabilities of writers, and the writer finds it equally impossible to demonstrate his ability. This condition is due solely to studio system, or the lack of it. Duties and responsibilities are not clearly defined, but constantly overlap and conflict. The writer is compelled to guess and to grope for what the producer or supervisor has in mind but can not express, or to follow orders which his professional training tells him instantly are absurd. Added to his difficulties are the mental hazards under which he constantly labors-the trick contract that may deprive him of adequate compensation and the buck-passing, by which he may be robbed of credit if the picture be good, and visited with censure if it be bad.

Many of the best writers of the world have been brought to Hollywood to write for the screen, and the fact that, almost without exception, they have failed miserably proves conclusively, not that they can not write, but that no one can write under the conditions imposed. That some few, after years of experience, have been able to break through and distinguish themselves may be attributed to a combination of ability and fortuitous circumstances. Standard contracts designed to protect the writer against the destructive system in vogue will inevitably reform these conditions and give the writer the chance to which he is entitled.

Picture production is a complex art in which those of the different crafts have their proper place. Controversy as to their relative importance is futile. Writers should be permitted to write their scripts without the interference of directors, and directors should be permitted to direct their stories without the interference of writers. When the personal equation enters into the problem one who is competent to write and direct his own stories should be allowed to do it. What is needed is more of intelligent cooperation and less of ignorant authority.

It's Possible By TOM MIRANDA

A LOT is being said and much is being written about who is at fault over the high cost of making moving pictures. Everyone is blaming the poor producer. They say all manner of things about him. He is ignorant, egotistical, unapproachable, carried away by his own importance, all of which is a lot of bunk. If anything, he is just the opposite.

During my twelve years in pictures, I have met very few producers who were not only willing, but eager to accept and follow intelligent suggestions in the matter of making pictures. If they were ignorant in the beginning (and who of us were not?) they have been the quickest to learn. Many of the great forward strides made by pictures in the past five years are due to the genius of the producer, or to his aid and fearless co-operation. At best his end of the game is a gamble. He surrounds him-

self with what he believes to be the most capable and efficient organization, pays them considerably more than they could secure in any other profession or business, and if he doesn't get results, why should he kick up a fuss?

The one big fault with the producers right now is overorganization. Too many advisers. As one producer recently said in answer to my question: "How are the pictures coming?" "Miranda, I don't know. I guess the real trouble with us is too much organization. I used to think that we made pretty good, and sometimes extra good pictures, and that I had ideas worth considering. But with all of our great supply of brains, we have a helluva time getting anywhere. I think we're over-misadvised."

Just as "Too many cooks spoil the broth", so will too many advisers spoil a picture.

Over-organization creates jealousies. Everyone wants a finger in the pie, and at the expense of all other fingers. The result is what the producer gets. John Smith's idea may have been masterful, the basis for a great picture, but if it brings no credit to Sam Brown, Eddie Jones, or Howard Sinclair, do you think it will ever reach the light? Perhaps, but John Smith will never get credit for it.

Then again we hear a lot about "creative work" and how it must be handled. "You can't drive imagination!" More bunk! The best work ever produced on the screen has been the brain child of some poor slave who was being driven by the well known little devil "overhead". "We must start shooting Monday", has created more big things in pictures than all the dreamy easy-chairs ever made.

Building a theatre is also creative work. Yet we don't see the contractor running around taking advice from a half dozen decorators, a half dozen carpenters, a half

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dozen architects, or a half dozen plumbers. Not much! He picks out the one best fitted for a particular job and he contracts with him to do that job according to plans and specifications. But once he picks his man, he relies on that man's judgment to finish the job. And in most cases the job stands. Naturally, it is not always 100% perfect, but in the completed product, or building, it stands for what it is, and he is paid off as agreed. Since building a theatre is creative work, wherein does it greatly differ from making a motion picture?

Some day, some one is going to tackle the job of making pictures in the same manner that S. M. Cooper or some other well known builder tackles the job of building houses. There will be a John Brown Organization that will take your story and their story architect will draw up a set of plans (continuity) for making it into a motion picture at a certain price, and accompanying this continuity will be a complete set of plans of every set to be used in the picture. The producer will see at a glance what his picture will cost and what it should be when completed, and he will know from the reputation of the John Brown Organization that it will be as near perfection as it is possible to produce it.

Mr. John Brown, picture contractor, will also suggest a cast for the picture (the cost of which will, of course, be included in his bid for making the picture). If the cast is not what the producer wants, and he has not suggested a cast at the outset, changes can be made as changes in decorations on a building contract are made. If John Brown agrees to finish the picture for \$100,000 satisfactorily and according to specifications O. K.'d by the producer, and the cost of producing it should be considerably more, then it will not be the producer's loss, but the contractor's.

This may sound like a far cry from the present system of production, but it is very possible and almost certain to come. Most certainly if there are great organizations that can turn out such creative works as Grauman's Chinese Theatre to Mr. Grauman's satisfaction, then there can be great picture-producing organizations that can contract to, and produce a certain story into a picture at a certain price, or on a cost-plus basis, with satisfaction to the man who furnishes the money. But they will be organizations of highly specialized brains. There will be no four-flushers drawing pay for decorating an arm chair and looking wise. Each member of the organization will be selected because of his expert ability as an artist in his especial line of endeavor.

It's bound to come, and it will be the outgrowth of economy and the producer's aim for better pictures. But it will not come so long as the producers are over-advised, or as my producer friend called it: "over-misadvised". For, until the producer learns to have confidence in the man he selects for a certain task, and allows him to carry out his own ideas alone, he will never see the great opportunity for economical production through the contractor's plan, or the director's cost-plus plan. His over-advisers won't let him see it. It means the end of their jobs.

We are nearing the age of the free lance artist, when only men of ability, who can produce results all of the time, will stand the gaff. Men whose work will place them in demand and whose ability, already proven, will be the stamp of quality by which the John Brown Organization will be known.

The Writer and the Motion Pictures

By MADELEINE MATZEN

THE other day I met and talked with a group of young and struggling writers. A poet, a man who had written an only mildly successful play, a newspaper woman, etc. Somebody had made pounds of fudge, there were sandwiches and home made wine and cake—so everyone was invited. You know how it is when writers "get together"—you've heard the racket of talk at The Writers' Club!

There was much talk and it dealt mostly with the difficulty that the new writer encounters in storming the studio gate.

The playwright was holding forth:

"I've had lots of chances to write for the screen!" he said. "Strange opportunities at mediocre salaries to write with certain of the highest paid continuity and scenario writers. Positions in which I was to give any ideas that I had in the way of plots, action and characterization—in short I was to inject fresh and new interest into their work and receive no credit on the screen or in the industry for it. It was work 'under cover' and the result, it was hoped, would add lustre to the names of those who were paying me. I was not to be on the studio payroll—these writers would pay me out of their own pockets. If anyone questioned me I was to pose as "their secretary"!

"Most of the BIG writers in the industry are written out. The reason for this is doubtless due to the fact that

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they are lost in a rut of policy and technique, or perhaps they have so little to write of that after a few years they just naturally cease to function. Many of the so called 'BIG' writers are thriving and forging ahead on the brains of young and unknown writers of whom you never heard."

"Writing poetry doesn't keep the wolf from the door," interrupted the poet, "so I work all day in a cutting room at one of the big studios. The waste of work and time and money that is swept up each day from the cutting room floor appals me! Hundreds of families could live a whole year on the waste that is shown on the film which is thrown away. When a director is handed the job of doing a big picture, the first thing he does is to lose his head, acquire a delusion of grandeur, and the sinful waste begins.

"I come in contact with the highest paid continuity and title writers when they drift into the cutting room to oversee the work. Most of them are given to misuse of the English language, they say things like 'me and her', 'we wuz', etc. They are the 'dese, dem and doze' boys of the industry," he concluded.

I looked my unbelief—but a girl who cuts film at a different studio insisted that it was true. The poet is a university graduate, a fact which he dare not mention in the cutting room—it would cost him his job, he told me, for it would make the "dese, dem and doze" boys nervous.

"I hear that Poverty Row will give the unknown writer a chance!" began the newspaper woman. "There is precious little waste on their cutting room floors! But what chance have they against the big fellows? Someone spread the polite rumor that stories are stolen along The Row but I have yet to hear of a real case of a stolen story on Poverty Row. But every so often the big companies are being sued for plagiarizing a story. At the big studio they seem to absorb any new ideas that are floating about—they don't call it stealing—they call it 'using every means to make the screenplay a success'.

"Those who have arrived by writing for the 'movies' have formed a pretty tight ring to keep out the newcomer. They yell in protest if you accuse them of it, but the old names continue to turn out rotten pictures and draw down exhorbitant salaries. There is no such thing as logic in a studio—there are only politics, and pull. It is the most unsound, the shakiest business in the world—and the scandal lies in the fact that it is one of our chief indutries.

"Our paper is planning a series of 'pogroms' intended to kill off unnecessary duds in the way of overpaid names that are littering up the various picture corporations. It will be a wholesale slaughter—believe me!" she laughed, and added, "But it may clear out a space for the newcomers!"

As I listened to the talk I saw the handwriting on the wall. The day of changes in the industry is at hand. A revolution is brewing down below, far below the seats of the mighty producers. It need not be a bloody revolution, there will be no strikes, but the producers themselves have played their last cards and I believe the day of the NEW producers is at hand. The day of men who will give us photoplay after photoplay as big in every sense as The Last Laugh, The Big Parade, and Sunrise. Great pictures should not be made by accident, they should be made deliberately, and there have been far too many long and boresome gaps between big pictures.

Those who have invested their money in picture making are beginning to grumble. Stories of waste and favoritism have reached their ears. SOMETHING HAS GOT TO HAPPEN! Things can't grow much worse—the average output of pictures couldn't be poorer so it is natural that the future must be brighter.

No, I am not a Bolshevik! I believe in the aristocrat! But there are precious few aristocrats sitting in the seats of power in the motion picture world. It is because I am so AGAINST Bolshevism that I want changes. I believe that brains and breeding and background are coming into their own in the picture world. I believe that vulgar showmanship and ten cent ideals are dying out. I believe that finer, subtler values will be appreciated, that the idealist, the poet, the dreamer and the philosopher will come in at the front studio gate as the too smart wise-crackers are shown out the back way.

And I believe that all this will come about because the people, the "fans", all over the world have demanded it!

A CORRECTION

An unfortunate error appeared in the page advertisement of the Western Costume Company in the last issue of The Spectator. At the end of the second paragraph of the letter addressed to Louis B. Mayer there appeared this sentence: "Also it costs us \$80,000.00 per month to maintain this stock in usual condition." The word "usual" should have read "usable", which gives the statement an entirely different meaning. The Spectator gladly makes this correction in justice to the Western Costume Company, which, by the way, is the world's largest costume house.

PAUL PEREZ

has been loaned by Mack Sennett to title "Home-Made" and "Flying Luck" for . .

Johnny Hines & Monty Banks

Exclusive Management Rebecca & Silton

Concerning Spectator Advertising

By Louis Jacobin, Advertising Manager, The Film Spectator

As I write, the editor of The Spectator is enjoying his first vacation since establishing his now famous Somewhere in the great periodical. Northwest he is rambling around in a car, traveling over billowing acres strewn with the passion of wild flowers, through virgin forests untouched as yet by the woodsman's axe or the relentless hand of the realtor. He is forgetting for a brief moment the land of make-believe, as his soul be-comes enraptured in the serenity of lofty mountains wrapped in eternal snow, of green vales and cool, rippling rills, of turbulent streams laughing waters roll and tumble and foam over the boulders in their mad rush to the sea.

On the eve of his departure for the Northland, Mr. Beaton instructed me to assist in "lining up" the material for this issue of The Spectator. I have attempted to carry out the editor's orders to the letter, and have gone him one better. I have taken advantage of his absence by breaking into print myself, contrary to a steadfast policy. I am doing this because I have a message on advertising which I believe should be told, and I am to tell it at the risk of catching hell.

First of all, I want to say that while

Vignola, Tom Heffron, Rex Ingram, Ed. Le Saint, Irvin Willat

my newspaper and advertising experience with various publications extends over a period of years, I have never before been so happily connected. It is far from dull, laborious work to handle my department. It is rather a pleasure. True, once in a while a bit of grief bobs up, but this is more than offset by the genuine satisfaction that it affords me to represent a publication so highly recognized by thinking men and women. More-over, it has been a lot of fun for me to watch our advertising patronage grow and hold its own with the substantial weekly increase in circulation. A few months ago we carried only a few scattered ads. Today, The Spectator leads in the number of advertisements carried by the several local film publications. This record has been made despite the fact that the little magazine is less than two years old, charges a higher rate for space and sells it solely upon the merits of The Spectator as a desirable advertising medium, without promise of editorial support or write-ups of any sort what-

The writers, especially, are taking advantage of the splendid opportunity they have to keep their names and achievements before the industry. These intelligent, educated men and

women who supply so much of the real brains in the making of motion pic-tures, can appreciate the advertising value of this publication and the good it is accomplishing toward the perfection of the cinema art. Smart shops and other business establishments catering to the high-salaried motion picture people have been rather slow in accepting the best bet that has ever been offered to them in the way of a medium through which to increase their business and good will. But they, too, are beginning to look upon The Spectator with favor, and each succeeding issue finds an increase in the number of commercial advertisements.

With all due respect to those keen merchants who really know the relative value of various advertising mediums, I cannot help thinking sometimes that one of the great needs in the business world today is a school teaching the art of advertising. Millions of dollars are wasted every year in blue-sky advertising. With a thousand and one advertising propositions being presented to him by high-pressure salesmen, the average shopkeeper, who is too busy with his other business affairs to give the matter of advertising proper consideration, is apt to go wrong occasionally in his choice of mediums. A clear under-standing of the psychology of advertising would prove a boon to the average merchant. It would also prove a boon to meritorious advertising propositions.

His scripts have been "shot" by such directors as William Beaudine, Harry Pollard,

HARVEY THEW

WRITER

At present with Fox

Demmy Lamson, Mgr. Ruth Collier, Asso.

Marshall Neilan, Frank Urson, James Cruze, Erle Kenton, Wallace Worsley, Robt.

Wm. A. Seiter, Geo. Melford, Donald Crisp, Robt. Leonard.

MADELEINE RUTHVEN Writer

M-G-M

TOM REED

JAMES FLOOD

Director

B

Exclusive Representative

JACK GARDNER

HO. 7950

HARRY BEHN

Fourth on The Spectator's table of box-office ratings of screen writers.

GLENDALE 7238

1900 East Glen Oaks, Glendale

WILFRID NORTH

CHARACTER ACTOR

HOLLYWOOD 7252

Writing for F. P. L.

W. SCOTT DARLING

"Wine, Woman and Song" . F. N.
"Down Went McGinty" . . . F. N.
"On Ze Boulevard" . . . M.-G.-M.
"Topsy and Eva" U. A.

Management,
Lichtig and Englander

PAUL KOHNER

Now Supervising "The Symphony" Starring Jean Hersholt

"Freedom of the Press", All-Star Special,
George Melford directing,
for Universal

HARRY O. HOYT

WRITING AND DIRECTING

LOIS WEBER'S GARDEN VILLAGE 4632 Santa Monica Boulevard

Single Studio Cottages

Artistically and Completely Furnished

Beautiful Grounds

\$45.00 and \$50.00 per Month with Garage Phone 599-215 Distinction and Quality

FINE GIFTS and STATIONERY

CHRYSON'S, Inc.

6926 Hollywood Blvd. GLadstone 3156

STORY OF THE BOX-OFFICE

By NORMAN WEBB

Now that Greater Movie Season is at its height and the boxoffices are clicking strongly all over the country, it should be of special interest to know just what type of production and just what trend of story are leading the field. In glancing over recent box-office figures it is readily seen that certain stereotyped forms of production are just about passé, while newer combinations are being introduced and meeting with the approval of Mr. and Mrs. Public.

Stories with the late World War as a locale have always been more or less of a speculation. During the last two or three years of the war and for a short time after, the market was literally flooded with "war stuff". Then for almost five years came a lull in this type, and producers sought other locales for their pictures. But in the fall of 1925 when King Vidor's Big Parade was released and became such an overwhelming success almost over night, it again reversed the tables, making the war a popular background for big film spectacles.

De Mille produced two of the most successful stories of this class, namely Three Faces East and The Volga

Then the Fox studios contributed What Price Glory? which has proven such a sweeping success that they have engaged Laurence Stallings to write a sequel to it, which they will film in the near future.

M.-G.-M. in its very successful production of Tell It to the Marines, switched the war locale from Europe to China. But still this picture is in the modern warfare classification. Furthermore, M.-G.-M. re-issued The Four Horsemen and also released Rex Ingram's Mare Nostrum, which deals with submarine warfare on the Mediterranean in the World War. Both have been very well received by the public, as the box-office registers, although the production cost on the latter was far too great to be able to leave the M.-G.-M. Distributing Com-

pany much of a profit.

Paramount thought they would be different, and instead of filming modern warfare, dug back into history and produced Old Ironsides and The Rough Riders. Old Ironsides, as previously mentioned, has failed to hold up at the box-office, and the latter is only doing an average good business, while it was originally slated to be a road-show. Not to be outdone in the grand rush of war epics, Paramount again tried their luck with a modern war story, Wings, and evidently with

figures to date show. Therefore they are planning to film a sequel to Wings, The Legion of the Condemned, by the same author, John Monk Saunders.

First National lost so much money on their war epic, June Mathis's Greater Glory, which was supposed to

much more success, as the box-office

have been another Four Horsemen, that they have rather steered clear of "war stuff" for a while. However, when they took Dick Barthelmess from Inspiration Pictures and put him under their own management, they used a war story to start him off with. The exhibitors and film salesmen told Dick Rowland that Barthelmess' recent Inspiration Pictures had been so very poor that there was only one way to save him, which was for Dick to stage a big, smashing come-back in a super-special. So Rupert Hughes's Patent Leather Kid was selected, because it told of a big angle in the late war that had been overlooked in previous productions—that of the Tank Corps. Since The Patent Leather Kid has just opened, it is hard to estimate just how big a success it will be. Yet the advance seat sales seem to indicate very big!

Because Paramount's war story dealt with the Aviation Corps and Barthelmess' war story with the Tank Corps, Robert Kane thought he would take another angle and play up the navy's part in his production of Convoy. But Convoy missed fire and has proven a national flop. Yet this is to be expected when we consider the fact that practically all of Kane's First National releases, since Bluebeard's Seven Wives, have been boxoffice failures. Some day soon, the First National franchise holders will wake up and tell Dick Rowland that they are going to over-rule him and exclude the Kane pictures from their

One of the most important developments that has grown out of the numerous war epics has been the war comedies and the formation of male comedy teams by almost every producer in the business. Following the great success of The Cohans and the Kellys, the film market was deluged with Jewish-Irish comedies to such an extent that many of them didn't get a "break" and a good many of them "flopped" outright. Therefore the war comedy team has been a great relief, and has brought forth such successes as Behind the Front, We're in the Navy Now, Tin Hats, Rookies, The Better 'Ole, with Two Arabian Knights about to be released. In Lost at the Front, First National took their Jewish-Irish comedy team into the trenches with fairly successful results.

Among the various comedy teams now in production are Paramount's Beery-Hatton team and their Conklin-Fields team; M.-G.-M.'s Dane-Arthur team and their new Polly Moran-Marie Dressler team; P. D. C.'s Allan Hale-Slim Summerville team; First National's Murray-Kelsey team; Fox's Sammy Cohen-Ted McNamara team and Universal's George Sydney-J. Farrell McDonald team.

This line-up looks as if the comedy field will be more than well taken care

of for the ensuing season. So far the box-office, besides proving that these comedy teams are quite popular, has also proven that the originators still "take the cake". In other words, Beery and Hatton, who were the first war comedy team, are still playing to a very much bigger box-office business than their nearest competitors, although their latest, Fireman, Save My Child, has not been any too strong, which may indicate that the public is getting fed up on this sort of thing. However, I personally believe that this is only true because Fireman, Save My Child did not have the gags and situations that were found in Behind the Front and We're in the Navy Now.

Ever since Harold Lloyd and Bebe Daniels appeared in their two most successful box-office pictures, namely The Freshman and The Campus Flirt, the collegiate type of story has been particularly successful. This has been proven not only by features, but also by Universal's two-reel series, The Collegians, which have scored as well abroad as they have here in the States. The collegian type of story is more or less identified with the flapper type, which was so successfully introduced to the screen by Colleen Moore and Clara Bow, and which is so strongly supported at the box-office by the younger generation.

Among pictures now in production that should help supply the demand for the collegiate type are the West Point stories of Billy Haines and Bill Boyd. Buster Keaton's College, Colleen Moore's Naughty But Nice, and Paramount's Rolled Stockings with Louise Brooks and James Hall, are recent proven box-office hits, also of this class.

Heavy melodramas with strong love themes also seem very popular at the present time. Seventh Heaven and Flesh and the Devil have both played to record-breaking business wherever exhibited. Other pictures now being released in this class and which are almost playing to capacity business, include Warner Brothers' In Old San Francisco and Paramount's Underworld and The Way of All Flesh.

When Chaplin produced A Woman of Paris with Adolphe Menjou, he created a demand for a sophisticated type of society stuff that never has died, although it has changed from drama to comedy-drama. Paramount's series of the Adolphe Menjou sophisticated comedy-dramas have been very successful and are continuing to grow in popularity.

First National with Lewis Stone has attempted the same type of story, but not with much success. Six years ago Stone proved quite a sensation in The Dangerous Age and for a short time afterwards he held up well at the box-office. But by putting leading ladies opposite Stone, to whom he was old enough to be father—

BENJAMIN S. KUTLER

Telephone OXford 6023

Originals and Adaptations

JOHN FARROW

DE MILLE STUDIO

TAY GARNETT Writer

DE MILLE STUDIO

Demmy Lamson, Manager Ruth Collier and W. O. Christensen, Associates

When the Editor gets back from fishing

AL COHN

ought to get some ad!

Secretary speaking.

CHARLES KENYON

SCENARIST

APRILITY.

UNIVERSAL

DANIEL G. TOMLINSON

WRITER

OXford 4536

PAUL SCHOFIELD

ORIGINALS AND **ADAPTATIONS**

WANTED SALESMAN

in each territory to handle something new in Motion Picture Advertising needed by every theatre. You should easily make \$100 weekly. Quick action will put you next to the niftiest idea in years. Wire address and telephone number to

K. WOODWARD

5 E. Main Street Uniontown, Pa.

DUDLEY MURPHY

ORIGINAL STORIES IN CONTINUITY

Now Doing Another Original for De Mille

and in some cases almost grand-father—First National has killed the sense and reality of such pictures, and consequently Stone's pictures have suffered greatly at the box-office. Furthermore, First National has cast him in far too many releases, with the result that exhibitors claim that they have had to run two or three of his pictures in a row.

M.-G.-M. have had a little better luck with their Lew Cody series than First National have had with their Lew Stone series, and yet for sophisticated comedy-dramas they don't compare with the Menjou pictures, either in production quality or at the boxoffice. Cody's Gay Deceiver and On Ze Boulevard both were very weak because of poor stories and poor direction. The series in which he is now appearing, in which he is co-starred with Aileen Pringle, will probably do a much better business. The first of these, Adam and Evil, just released, is holding up fairly well so far.

It is especially interesting to note that these three portrayers of the sophisticated male have all recently appeared as waiters. The business they have played to, respectively, in their three pictures, is as follows:

The Prince of Headwaiters happens to be Lewis Stone's biggest hit in several years, while on the other hand, On Ze Boulevard has proven the biggest flop Lew Cody ever has appeared in. This does not necessarily mean that Lewis Stone makes a better waiter than Lew Cody. But it does prove that a good story and good direction are necessary to make a real box-office success. John Francis Dillon is a very capable director and had a very good script to use on The Prince of Headwaiters. But On Ze Boulevard had a jinx on it from the very start. The story was "re-hashed" several times and then Director Harry Millarde was withdrawn in the middle of the production and replaced by Christy Cabanne. Neither of these directors have very enviable box-office records, and furthermore it does not pay to change directors in the middle of a picture. After Harry Rapf's fine supervision of Mr. Wu and Rookies, it is quite disappointing to see what a mess he made out of On Ze Boulevard. Moral: Don't try to do too many things at once, especially at such an important task as supervising pictures.

Ever since The Merry Widow made new box-office history, stories having mythical kingdoms and central European countries as locales, have been more or less popular. Graustark and Beverly of Graustark both were very successful, and now we have The Prince of Graustark about to be filmed with Ramon Novarro starred. Billie Dove's latest release, The Stolen Bride, comes under this classification and is playing to a very strong box-

office, thanks to Carey Wilson's script and supervision.

The very newest cycle of successful pictures, however, seems to be based on current events of international importance. Several discriminating critics have said that the public wouldn't fall for this line of current events as backing for feature productions, as the news reels already have taken the edge off any possible worth-while situations. But the box-office, contrary to the critics, seems to prove that the public likes to see its idols in such roles.

Besides Paramount's aviation story, Wings, Universal is presenting an aerial story, The Lone Eagle; Richard Dix, George O'Brien and Richard Barthelmess have all recently appeared as pugilists in stories of the ring. Bebe Daniels and Gertrude Ederle are appearing in Swim, Girl, Swim. And besides Trudy, Red Grange has made another production for F. B. O. Evidently baseball has only a limited following. While Billy Haines' Slide Kelly Slide and Wally Beery's Casey at the Bat both rang the bell at the box-office, Babe Ruth in his First National production, Babe Comes Home, has proven one of the outstanding flops of the past season.

VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

READERS AND PICTURES

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Madeleine Matzen's article, "Almost Anyone Can Read", in The Film Spectator interested me, because I was for a few years with the story department of one of the large producing companies.

Miss Matzen lays stress upon the snobbishness that exists in certain story departments, and she instances the fact that stories are often judged not so much by their merit as by their physical appearance in manuscript.

This is not exactly the case. It

This is not exactly the case. It may be so in a few instances, but readers soon discover that some of the writers whose work is most eagerly sought by the producers, turn in very careless and often shabby manuscripts.

A worse type of snobbery is the manner assumed by certain of the young readers, with their stiff, professionally college bred attitude, who squint down their noses at the writers; who assume to patronize them when they call at the studios, and who talk with glib poise and authority. Thus the work of men and women who have made places for themselves in the literary world are judged by these arrogant and immature youngsters.

Of course, all readers are not of this type. There are some sincere, cultured and highly intelligent men and women who are working as readers in story departments. However, the remuneration for this work is so small and the demands so heavy that it is rather remarkable that we are able to secure the services of any but people of mediocre intelligence. Moreover, the readers are so poorly regarded as to seem to be mere nonentities. Perhaps the reason why the producers despise them is because they are willing to work for so little; because also they are meek and lowly and allow themselves to be "bawled out" or ignored without protest.

This is the work of a reader: To read novels, short stories, plays, syndicated newspaper stuff, original manuscripts, etc.; to write synopses of the stories read and give forth constructive criticism and comment.

The pay for this work averages

about \$30 a week. In fact, readers get about the salaries of the average stenographer or secretary, and indeed the secretary of an executive is treated with far greater deference and considered of more importance than a mere reader.

Miss Matzen is right. This work should be done by the highest type of mind. It is just as important to a producer to have skilled readers as to have skilled scenarists. A reader should not merely turn out dull, wooden synopses, but so treat his or her work that, in a way, the synopses should be as clear-cut as adaptations. I do not say this should be done with every story read. It should be done certainly with every story recommended.

A story editor and his readers should first of all be possessed (have, in fact, the gift) of story sense. They should know and recognize good stories when they read them; be able to think them into picture ideas; treat and adapt them so that in clear, graphic words they may be set down and made comprehensible to the studio heads and executives to whom they must be sold.

Story sense is a valuable product on the motion picture market. editor or reader possessed with this sense should be of as much value to the producer as an adapter, a scenarist or a continuity writer. Story sense calls for imagination, sensitiveness, dramatic perception, human understanding, a knowledge of people and of life. The reader and editor should study the psychology of motion picture audiences and note what they react to. They will never learn this by merely attending previews and openings and sticking before a typewriter all day. That is one reason why the maturer men and women make the better readers. They know life and people.

The story department is the source of the product which makes our pictures. To despise the underpaid story editors and readers; to man the department with young and cheap help shows poor judgment on the part of the producers. It has always been a mystery to me how it is possible to

obtain the services of readers at the salaries paid. A well known author read books for a motion picture company at \$5 a book—and this is not an uncommon case. She told me once she was able by persistent work to do four a week. That is, read and synopsize them. She did not explain how she found the time to do her original writing. At this particular time, as I recall it, her books were not listed among the best sellers and she was very much in need of the \$5 a book. She was responsible, through her remarkable synopses, for the buying of some of the greatest pictures produced.

I do not agree with Miss Matzen

that old writers are in a rut and that the new writer will do better work. Who and what are the new writers? Does Miss Matzen mean the younger writers? No natural writer ever gets in a rut. That is to say, no one with the real gift of thought and ability to express himself. The trouble is, too many hacks, men and women turning out stereotyped, manufactured, studioworn stuff, both among the readers and the scenario writers, are kept in place just as Miss Matzen suggests, through politics, or because they have become a sort of fixture or habit. On the other hand, we have the spectacle of the flapper writers. Fresh, cocksure youngsters who think they know it all,

and between the two evils it is hard to know which is the worst. Readers should be chosen first and last because of their ability—their talent. That is important,—and an editor should be able to discover this after a test or two with books assigned to them to read.

Ex-Editor.

FROM A LIBRARY FREQUENTER

Dear Sir:

I had the good fortune this evening of discovering your magazine for the first time, in the local public library. I became interested immediately and, having read it through, requested the librarian to let me have all the avail-

JOSEPH FRANKLIN POLAND

Supervising Editor of Feature Comedies UNIVERSAL

The adaptation and continuity of "A Man's Past" showed fine skill.

(Jas. P. Calhoun in The Film Mercury)

"A MAN'S PAST"

From the German play, "Diploma"

SCREEN PLAY

bv

EMIL FORST

HE. 7715

Writing for United Artists

JACK JEVNE

"Tempest" John Barrymore
"Breakfast" . . Constance Talmadge
"McFadden's Flats" . First National
"Ladies at Play" . First National
"Clinging Vine" . . Leatrice Joy
"Eve's Leaves" . . . Leatrice Joy

Writers' Club — HOllywood 7145

GLADSTONE 4809

TITLES by
DWINELLE BENTHALL
and RUFUS McCOSH

228 MARKHAM BLDG. HOLLYWOOD

ALFRED HUSTWICK

is coming back along the road of convalescence and his brain will be untired after his long rest.

Think what that means.

VERA VINCENT

TITLES
Wisecrack Specialist

Phone 592-494

Lois Weber's Garden Village 4632 Santa Monica Blvd. JOSEPH JACKSON'S

Original Story

"ON TO RENO"

is now being produced by JAMES CRUZE

LICHTIG & ENGLANDER,
Representatives

The Chicago Theatre Strike

able back numbers. The library doors are now closed and I've been ejected but, thanks to your magazine, I've had a very enjoyable evening. When one recalls the short-comings of the majority of our films, it is very irritat-ing and it is about time that claws and teeth were laid bare and a few quills thrown.

I have an awful nose for detail and I often leave a theatre literally swearing at the idiots who have spoiled what might have been a good picture by lack of judgment or observation. The mention of The Yankee Clipper set me boiling. How well I recall seeing that picture. I, too, noticed the flag but that was but one of many blunders and insults to the intelligence of the beholder. Another picture that almost made me weep with indignation was Bardelys the Magnificent. This picture was full of preposterous situations and mistakes in costumes and settings. It was at times a mere burlesque of some of the fine acting of Douglas Fairbanks.

Your readers seem to take great pleasure in finding any fault in your punctuation, grammar or spelling. saw none but, just to show you that I'm a bit on the alert, I might ask you

to explain the following:

In the issue of August 6, 1927, page 10, you say "I never saw Kent before" and in the issue of May 19, 1927, page of Arnold Kent, etc.". How come? Perhaps in your later issue you were recalling a review that took place previously to the one mentioned in the earlier number.

Have you seen Richard Dix in Manpower? The plot is identical with that of a picture starring "Wallie" Reed about six years ago. The "Mack" truck was used in Reid's picture instead of a tractor but the plot was the same all the way through.

HARRY P. BRAISTED.

New Haven, Conn.

AN ENGLISHMAN CONCURS

Dear Mr. Beaton:

A friend sent me your letter containing your arresting and remarkable articles dealing with the respective merits of the films, The King of Kings and From Manger to Cross. I have not seen the film The King of Kings and therefore, cannot sit in judgment, but I can say that I agree with you when you talk of the great grip of Sidney Olcott as a director. He is a very remarkable man-a leader of men. Given the subjects, I am confident that he would make the world's most remarkable pictures. I have never seen any company throw themselves into their task with such earnestness as the company working under the aegis of Sidney Olcott.

It was entirely owing to him that the film From Manger to Cross suggests a note of spiritual passion which seems to communicate itself to the people who see it unfolded on the screen. I thank you most cordially

for your appreciation.

R. HENDERSON BLAND. 219a Maida Vale, London, W.

SHORT time ago The Spectator took up the issue of the proposed 10% salary cut, condemning it, and stating that the trouble was not in high salaries, but rather in the mismanagement of studios by their present executives. Mr. Beaton in his editorial pointed out that while it was Jesse Lasky who originally proposed the 10% salary cut, it was also his studio that had been among the biggest wasters of unlimited amounts of money on scenes and sets that never were shown on the

Now along comes the Chicago theatre strike which closed approximately 411 theatres for a six-day period at a reported loss of \$1,000,000, according to Associated Press dispatches. Although this theatre gross loss is greatly exaggerated, it is safe to say that the lost revenue was around \$100,000 a day, or a total of \$600,000 for the six days that the theatres were closed. I know for a positive fact that the four biggest Publix-Balaban & Katz first run houses, namely the Oriental, the Chicago, McVickers and the Roosevelt, together lost \$24,000 a day, or \$144,000 over a six-day period that they were closed. Accordingly, I believe I am quite safe in estimating the loss of the other 407 theatres at \$456,000 for the six days.

This unnecessary strike proves all the more just how badly the largest producer-distributor-exhibitor corporations are mismanaged in their home offices, as well as in their studios. call the strike unnecessary because it was known before it came to pass just when and why it was due, and it could have been settled just as easily with the theatres operating as with them locked up, while the public waited in line outside.

Since Jesse Lasky is vice-president in charge of production, we can hardly hold him responsible for the strike, but rather Sam Katz, president of Publix Theatres and a member of the board of directors of the Paramount-Famous-Lasky Corporation. Although the strike actually started in an Orpheum house, the Publix executives could easily have averted the strike, since Chicago has been a Publix controlled theatre city ever since that corporation took over the operation of the Balaban & Katz houses, just one

But since Publix and Paramount are one and the same, the loss is also one and the same. If Messrs Lasky & Katz would learn how to run their company on a good solid business basis, it would not be necessary for them to recommend salary cuts for writers, directors, actors and technicians, who have devoted their entire lives to making the motion picture in-dustry what it is to-day, the fourth biggest in the United States.

The \$600,000 gross loss of the Chicago theatres, which was a deliberate waste of money, would be sufficient to give every one of the 1,100 Paramount Studio employees a \$10 a week raise for one whole year. I hope the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences will remember this incident, when the four branches mentioned above have another confab with their

brother producers' branch!

MOWING 'EM OVER

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Although I very rarely agree with a single word that you have to say, and despite the fact that I often find the snap judgments you render conducive to excessive heat under the collar, yet I have stolen or borrowed, and once or twice purchased each succeeding issue of your invariably interesting magazine. Intelligent and civilized writing, even though it be based, as in your case, upon a very febrile conception of the motion picture industry, is so rare and refreshing when compared to the drool offered by the other trade and fan magazines, that one can not really afford to miss it.

the save myself necessity of swiping The Film Spectator from the desks of my colleagues here, I am, therefore, sending you a check for a year's subscription, and with it go my very best wishes for yourself and your magazine.

F. HUGH HERBERT.

DELINQUENT LIST

The Spectator acts in good faith when it introduces advertisers to its readers. It assumes also that its ad-

vertisers are acting in good faith towards it when they insert advertisements. When it finds out otherwise it is not going to trouble lawyers about it. It expects those who can pay for their advertising to do so. Those who are unfortunate can explain their circumstances and nothing harsh is going to happen to them. Those who can pay and refuse to do so, and who ignore all the letters we write to them, and even send us flippant messages to "try to get it", are not going to be bothered. We are going to publish a delinquent list, and let it go at that.
Those whom we found it was un-

wise to extend credit to are: Reed Heustis, screen writer.

Fred H. Bagley, public accountant and income tax specialist.

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No. 3

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Tommyrot about trend of public taste

Darryl Zanuck writes us a letter

PAJAMAS

ADAM AND EVIL

ARIZONA NIGHTS

FIGHTING EAGLE

REJUVENATION of AUNT MARY

COLLEGE

SECRET STUDIO

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HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, OCTOBER 1, 1927

In Appreciation of Friends' Contributions

NLY partly back on the job. The lakes in which mountains stand on their heads, streams which form pools where trout lurk, roads that tunnel through verdure, and landscapes that are forever green pull hard when you should turn your back on them. But there's another year, and others after it, and the lakes and streams and roads will be there, and the eternal eyeresting green. My holiday, taken quite as much for Spectator readers as for myself, was made possible only through the kindness of those who filled the Contributors' Number so full that it overflowed into this number, and there are still a few valuable articles that will make their appearance still later. In every way the Contributors' Number was a great success. It was one of the most thoughtful contributions to screen discussion ever compiled. For me, personally, it solved the problem of obtaining a short rest during which to store up vigor for another eleven months' work. In the next number, and in subsequent ones, until another holiday time comes around, I will occupy my usual space. Meanwhile, I have things to say in the following pages about pictures I saw while I was away.

Picking Them Up Along the Road

OKING about the country to get away from motion pictures and viewing one on every possible occasion is not my idea of a holiday for one who has a fiftytwo week job on The Spectator, but it is exactly the kind of holiday I have had, and I enjoyed it immensely. It gave me contact with real audiences, not the half-wise ones that we have in Los Angeles and Hollywood. I saw pictures in towns under ten thousand in population, and in that surprisingly metropolitan looking Puget Sound metropolis, Seattle. I found that the audiences laughed at pretty much the same thing all along the line. The sum total of my observations strikes a note akin to pathos. I left theatres feeling sorry for the audiences. When I saw what they applauded and laughed at, and reflected how very much better the same pictures could have been made by intelligent producers or supervisors, I felt that those who

paid to see them had been defrauded of something rightfully theirs. When we purchase an article we have the right to assume that we are receiving in exchange for our money the most perfect article that can be produced for that much money. When we buy a ticket to see Fred Thompson and his horse in a picture we have the right to presume that we are to see the best picture that money and brains can make. I saw a Thompson picture somewhere along the line, either in Medford or Eugene, Oregon, and was interested in the cordial reception it received from the crowded house. At the slightest hint of comedy there was spontaneous laughter, and the thrilling spots evoked applause. And still it was about the silliest thing I ever saw on the screen. Arizona Nights, it was called, in case you have seen it. None of the major situations was built on anything reasonable, and the comedy had as much to do with the story as it had to do with The King of Kings. "But," one of our brilliant producers will protest, "you say the house was crowded and the audience seemed pleased. What more can you expect?" The fact that a producer would talk that way is what is the matter with pictures. The poor quality of brains that we have running the business does not grasp the fact that pictures have a to-morrow. No Western star on earth, no matter how good his horse is, can build anything permanent on such utter rot as Arizona Nights. It pleases audiences that are craving Westerns and can get nothing better, but it can not hold its audiences. Fred Thompson is young enough to have many years before him yet. He knows nothing about acting, but is a handsome, manly chap who gives the impression of having lived cleanly and being a square shooter. Silver King, his horse, is a truly magnificent animal. It would be a simple matter to give the two of them stories that would get their pictures into the biggest houses all over the world, and at the same time would cause more laughter and provoke more applause in Oregon towns than they do now. Westerns are perhaps the only pictures that

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Oh,
I fain would sing of pictures—
Most delectable of arts—
So brimmed with latent promise
To enrapture human hearts;
Of such potential power
To fan emotion's fires
'Till they'd leap in sheer exuberance
From the embers of desires.

Well,
I read the gripping product
Of a writer's skilful pen,
That conjured moving pictures
Of the days when men were men,
And so clever his depiction,
Such the magic of his art
That a fellowship of feeling
Warmed the cockles of my heart.

Well,
My fancy went adventuring—
A barque on Aegean sea—
Old Ulysses and his rovers
Had not a thing on me;
I heard soft breezes whisper,
Heard the lookout's "All is well" . . .
(In this mood I saw the picture)—
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have universal appeal, yet on every lot they are held in low esteem. A writer apologizes for writing a Western, a director is ashamed to direct it and an actor blushes when he confesses that he is working in it, yet Westerns could be the most popular pictures before the public to-day if our production executives were equipped with ordinary business brains.

Someone Calling For Mr. Fullerton

HESE remarks are more or less rambling, as I was rambling around considerably when I received the impressions that inspired them. I am writing them in a secluded corner in the lobby of the Hotel Olympic, Seattle, where I have found a chair that offers the same degree of comfort as the one in which I sit, my pad on my knee, in my Hollywood home. The spot would be an ideal one for a morning of literary effort if Mr. Fullerton would answer the telephone. For at least an hour, "Call for Mr. Fullerton!" has come at five-minute intervals until I have grown to hate him and those who call him up. My task this morning is a delicate one. I must sort out all the pieces of pictures that I have seen in the last ten days and discuss them intelligently. I can not do this while I am wondering why so many people want to speak to Mr. Fullerton, or why one person is so persistent in his desire to tell him something. I must be careful or I will have Aileen Pringle playing opposite Clyde Cook and Rod La Rocque making love to Louise Brooks. At home I review each picture immediately after seeing it, and never carry more than one in my mind at once. Now I have six or seven to unscramble. The last I saw was The Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary, which May Robson made so gay on the stage and Metropolitan makes so sad on the screen. It is a long time since I saw the play, and can remember very little about it, but there must have been something in it to make it so popular for so long a time. The picture is almost devoid of sense. I do not know if the blame can be attached to Zelda Sears's story or to Earle Kenton's direction or to general studio stupidity. Part of the blame goes to the titles, which were childish. The whole point of the story, the rejuvenation of the crabby old woman, is covered in a title. Nothing is made of the comedy possibilities of the arrest of the aunt, and the court scene which follows it is too hopelessly ridiculous to be taken seriously and is handled too seriously to be regarded as farce. An automobile race, inserted for its production value, is treated with the same lack of intelligence that characterizes the whole picture, or, at least, as much of it as I sat through. All chance of making it thrilling was ruined when an ambulance was shown keeping up with the racing cars. The idea of having an ambulance follow the aunt and the hero was a funny one, but to achieve its full comedy value it should have been treated intelligently. The merest infant in an audience knows that an ambulance can not keep abreast of a car that travels considerably over one hundred miles an hour and no scene that shows an ambulance doing so can be really funny. You can not say to an audience, "This is comedy. Laugh." Comedy succeeds in the degree that it achieves the most fun with the most reason. Chaplin never strives for a laugh by doing something that the audience knows really can not be done. If a little more brains had been utilized in making this Metropolitan picture the ambulance sequence could have been made both funny and reasonable. Also all the rest of the picture might have been rich in entertainment value. It simply is a production that is counted on to get by on account of the title and star. It is a cheap swindle on the public, but it's done in pictures.

"Fighting Eagle" as Roadside Diversion

HYLLIS HAVER is in this Aunt Mary picture, and I saw her in The Fighting Eagle, which I ran across some place or other. If Mr. Fullerton would get his call, thus closing the incident, I might be able to recollect the town. In both pictures I thought her talents were wasted. In the Robson production she is pretty and sweet, but it is a part that scores of other girls in Hollywood could play as well, for it makes no demands upon acting ability. In The Fighting Eagle she has more to do, and does it excellently, but it is not the kind of part that should be given her. She excels as a mischievous little devil, such as she was in Nobody's Widow, and may be able to handle more dramatic parts as acceptably. In any case, she should be presented as an actress, and not as a conventional girl lead. The Fighting Eagle manages to escape being a really good picture. It has everything that a good picture should have, but it appeared to me that a combination of a poor script and indifferent direction robbed it of all the opportunities it had to be something worth while. It interested me to notice that the credits were cut out when I saw it, the main title and the cast being all that were given. Adam and Evil received similar treatment in some other town. However, I happen to know that Donald Crisp directed The Fighting Eagle, and I think he made a very poor job of it. It is fearfully movie. When Rod La Roque is arrested Phyllis secretes some papers in his hat in order that they will be carried to Napoleon. She does it while entirely surrounded by soldiers, any one of whom would have detected her. It is very raw. Then every little while someone almost finds the hat, a rather cheap and silly way of teasing an audience. Sally Rand is cast as the secretary of the great Tallyrand, a ridiculous bit of casting. It is giving to a child a part that should have been played by a Louise Dresser, or by someone else who looks as forceful and mature as Louise. Putting pretty young girls in parts simply because they are pretty and young, thus overlooking opportunities to bring out all the drama there is in stories, is a very foolish habit. All the pictures supervised by Gardner Sullivan stick pretty closely to movie traditions, and this one is no exception. In it the close-up evil is rife. A clash of wits between Phyllis and Sam de Grasse is shown in close-ups of one another which flash back and forth long after the point is put over. The champion close-up of all time is in this picture. It is an individual close-up of Rod while he is kissing Phyllis. If anyone ever saw a more idiotic close-up I wish he would write me about it. The part of Brigadier Gerard, played by La Roque, offered a chance for a notable characterization, but neither star nor director seemed to have any appreciation of its possibilities. Rod plays it as a movie star and not as a soldier of Napoleon. In the final scene between Gerard and Napoleon the camera features the former, and makes the great emperor appear as a person

of much less importance. That one scene spoils the whole characterization of Napoleon which Max Barwyn so carefully built up. It makes the great soldier, one of the most notable figures of all time, play second fiddle to a screen actor. I am surprised that such an intellectual man as Crisp did not appreciate this. When we take a great figure from history and put him on the screen he must dominate every scene in which he appears. In this picture Napoleon is gracious to Gerard, but the whole idea back of the scene is ruined by making the emperor look so unimportant that his graciousness becomes unimportant. In that one scene, at least, Donald should have forgotten that Rod is a star.

"Adam and Evil" and Bob Leonard

HERE are not more than a dozen directors whose pictures are at all times free from old fashioned stuff that reminds us that they are movies. This dozen will remain at the top of the list when we make pictures sensibly. They are the ones who think, and who do not compose their scenes to suit the cameraman. Even under the present weird system of making pictures they would be improved greatly if before a director shot a scene he would go into conference with himself and ask himself just why he was shooting it that way. In a scene in Adam and Evil two characters are seated at a round table in a cafe. It is a large table and they sit close together. I would like to ask Bob Leonard why he shot the scene that way. His only possible answer would be that he did it to accommodate the camera, a system by which good pictures never will be made. If Bob and Gertrude went to the Cocoanut Grove and were escorted by Jimmy to two places at an otherwise deserted large, round table, Bob would say things to Jimmy. The only way they would be seated would be facing one another across a table for two. In the same picture Lew Cody, a twin, gets a telegram to meet himself at the train. We are shown the telegram. When Lew arrives at the depot he turns to face the camera, takes the telegram from his pocket and reads it. Why? Didn't he know where he was? Did he have to be reminded why he was at the depot? It is just one of those silly shots for which there is no reason. Years ago someone started the habit of having his characters pull telegrams from their pockets before they could give directions to a taxi driver, read a street number or decipher a sign on an office door, and directors who don't think have not outgrown the habit. There is more old stuff in this Leonard picture. Aileen Pringle answers a telephone call. The phone is on a table which stands against the wall. She walks to it, picks up the phone and turns to face the camera as she converses. Why? If it was necessary to show her face while she was talking, why have the phone against the wall? If it was necessary to have the phone against the wall, why have her turn when she used it? Was there any reason why she should not stand naturally and carry on her conversation with her back to the camera? None whatever, except that movie traditions must be adhered to. However, I enjoyed Adam and Evil. Leonard has a lively sense of humor and on the whole his direction always is good. The story is a gay one and the picture is made a delightful one largely by the charming acting of Aileen Pringle. Heretofore I have seen Miss Pringle in parts that were either too austere or

too silly to make her register strongly with me, but in this picture she is captivating as a young married woman with a sense of humor. There is an opening on the screen for just such a girl in just such parts, but among those in authority on the Metro lot there is no one with enough brains to pick stories that have the necessary cleverness to put such a girl over. Lew Cody is quite amusing as the twins. His drunk scene is very well done. Someone else wants Mr. Fullerton—damn him!—on the phone.

Some Remarks on Keaton's "College"

OLLEGE, Buster Keaton's latest, is one of the various pictures which I saw on my travels which were presented without credits. I hunted up the manager of the house in which I viewed it and asked him why he eliminated them. He told me that he did it partly to save footage, but principally because his audiences were not interested in who directed his pictures, photographed them or wrote the stories. He asked me why Hollywood insisted upon including in its pictures the names of all those who assisted in making them, while all that interested the public was the cast. I told him that I did not know, but that in the present instance I would like to know who directed the picture and who wrote the story, but apparently he considered it too much trouble to hunt up his cut-outs and give me the information. I understood that Buster directed his own pictures until he engaged Chuck Reisner to handle the one he is making now. In my review of The General I advised him to get better stories and to engage a director. Some of the sequences in College indicate that the advice was taken in regard to the director, but I can see no evidence of an improvement in the story. The baseball game was directed splendidly, and is put on the screen with a degree of naturalness that seldom is attained. The same can be said for the track and field events. In fact, there are no weaknesses in any of the direction. But as a picture, College has the one supreme weakness of containing no real comedy. In it Keaton is presented as a dumbbell in everything but studies, and laughs are striven for by making him do foolish, not funny, things. As a soda clerk he misses an egg that he tries to catch. As an athlete he knocks over every hurdle he tries to jump. In both these respects I could have done as well as Buster. I can miss as many eggs and knock over as many hurdles. I might not perform these feats in a way to make Buster laugh, but as he did not perform them in a way to make me laugh, I still don't see that he has anything on me. You can not build comedy on purely negative acts that in themselves are unreasonable. Keaton comes to commencement to be presented with a scholarship medal. He walks into the meeting with an umbrella over his head. Even if he did it in a funny manner, which he does not, it would have little appeal as comedy, for a man who would do such a thing could not possibly be intelligent enough to win the medal. The act that betrays him as a halfwit belies the title that makes him brilliant. Chaplin, with his inherent pathos, might get away with such a part, but Keaton, lacking this great appeal, can not make it convincing. Yet I consider Buster Keaton to be one of the greatest screen actors we have. He deliberately has chosen a characterization that gives his talents definite limitations, but even within those limitations he demonstrates what a real artist he is. He is essentially a situation comedian, but

fills his pictures with situations which ignore the fundamentals of comedy. He endeavors to make himself an athlete to win the girl he loves. Where Chaplin might make such strivings pathetic, Keaton succeeds only in making them foolish. A feature of his characterization that I like, though, is the promise it gives of a gradual departure from the "frozen face" foolishness he has adhered to for so long. He does not smile, but he becomes animated several times, and they are his best moments. We'll have him laughing yet, and when he gets that far and has good stories and proper direction, he will have arrived. Anne Cornwall, quite a delightful little person, is his leading woman in College, and is fully equal to the part. There are some excellent titles in it. One feature that intrigued me was the manner in which some of the most subtle points were put over in medium and long shots. One of the many crazy notions of motion picture people is that it is only in closeups that points can be registered with sufficient emphasis to make them plain to the audience. That it is a crazy notion is shown by the treatment given some of the finest points in this Keaton picture.

"Secret Studio" a Feeble Affair

THEN I saw The Secret Studio at the Pantages theatre in Seattle there were no credits given. I do not know who directed it or who wrote the story. As I viewed it I came to the conclusion that it must be the first public offering of the university children to whom the Fox organization seems determined to trust its literary welfare. If so, it is a good start, for there are assembled in it practically all the screen faults that the young people must outgrow. To start with, Olive Borden should not be starred. She lacks both the ability and the photographic attractiveness that would qualify her for such distinction. The story of The Secret Studio is utterly ridiculous. It commits a fault that you find in many pictures, but which a producer can not get away with: taking an effect as an established fact without having completely developed the cause. Olive becomes an artist's model. She poses for two pictures and is the talk of the town. Men rave over her and women envy her. She wears million dollar outfits and gorgeous jewels. I had no idea that posing for pictures was such a lucrative occupation, or that it so spontaneously produced fame for one indulging in it. To prove that the girl is not that kind of a girl she indignantly spurns a suggestion that she pose in the nude. That establishes the fact that she has the moral rectitude to qualify her to be the heroine of a motion picture, even though later she is seen posing virtually in the nude, and has acquired clothes with an abundance that would make their source disturbing food for suspicious minds. "Have I not made you?" roars Ben Bard, all het up by the fires of passion burning within him. Made her what? That is the question which the story had to answer before it could be acceptable screen material. It is bad technic to show the characters in a sequence reacting to its scenes in a way contrary to that in which the audience will react. There is nothing in this whole picture that would make an audience enthusiastic over the girl, therefore to have the extras in scenes with her go wild over her attractiveness is to put a too great stress upon the credulity of the audience. Enthusiasm on the screen must be developed, not taken for granted. It can be developed off-stage. You can introduce

a girl with a flourish of trumpets following a title that she is a famous dancer; but you can not introduce her as an unknown, have her do a few simple steps that would enthuse no one, and show the spectators going crazy over her. To be convincing on the screen the dance turn must enthuse the people viewing the picture as much as it does the people in the scene with the girl. In The Secret Studio the mistake is made of showing all that the girl does, which could not possibly make her famous, and then planting her fame with a wild burst of enthusiasm. You've seen the same thing in dozens of pictures. The "comedy relief" in this picture is even sillier and more pointless than such interpolations usually are. In spots the direction is crude. People, enthusiastic over the attractiveness of a picture, cluster in front of it to admire it, but there is a broad lane through the group to enable the camera to catch the picture. It is amazing how often you see this particularly brainless bit of grouping. I am grateful to The Secret Studio for giving me another glimpse of Margaret Livingstone. I have seen here only in short bits, but I have seen enough in them to make me wonder why some producer does not wake up to the fact that she is one of the cleverest girls we have, one capable of giving a marvelous performance in a suitable part.

"Romance" a Regular Movie

ONSIDERING the story possibilities, the generally acceptable direction, the satisfactory cast, and the amount of money spent on it, Romance, starring Ramon Navarro, leaves one singularly unmoved. It was done beautifully from a production standpoint, but gets nowhere. Few of its sins were committed by John S. Robertson who directed. The man who gave us such a splendid picture as Captain Salvation ran foul of a weak story and unintelligent editing in Romance. I saw it in San Francisco, and, as was the case with all the pictures I saw while roaming around, there were no credits given, consequently I do not know whom to blame for the literary lapses. One would think that in a picture with such a title the romance would be developed. It is not. It is one of those spontaneous combustion affairs. Ramon takes one good look at Marceline Day, kisses her-and there's your romance. It could have been a beautiful love story, and I know of no two people who could have done it more credit than Navarro and the sweet, refined looking Marceline. Instead of building a real romance, Metro simply gives us another movie, that observes most of the movie traditions. Marceline's duenna betrays her mistress by handing to Marc McDermott some letters given to her for transmission to Havana. She does it stealthily-in the middle of a large patio entirely surrounded by windows. Strangely enough, some one sees her do it. Navarro, in the guise of a strolling mountebank, climbs to Marceline's balcony under the pretext of doing a card trick and imparts some information to her in a manner so secretive that no one except the hundreds of people gazing at the balcony would suspect that there was anything going on. Sequences that could have been made dramatic by intelligent treatment contain no drama whatever. Navarro sings a long song and the words are recorded on the screen, retarding the action and accomplishing nothing. Later he sings another song with a message in it for Marceline, thereby establishing the fact that the purpose of the first song

was to serve as a "tie-up" with the second. It was purely a mechanical bit of technic, an unthinking obeisance to the law that calls for "tie-ups" whenever possible, but in this instance there was no call for it. Although Marceline gives no evidence anywhere in the picture of being weak on her pins, Navarro picks her up and carries her when the two want to go anywhere together. The picture swashbuckles now and then. Navarro has an encounter with a bunch of swordsmen who would have subjugated anyone except a movie hero. More unimaginative treatment. It would have been more dramatic to have shown the hero on the point of being killed when he was first attacked, and to have brought the King's soldiers to his rescue at that time, making the whole sequence shorter, but brimful of suspense. By the movie method of treatment it was accorded Navarro keeps whacking at his attackers with mathematical precision until he has conquered all of them. Then comes the rescue party. It is hard to believe that such utterly childish stuff is done even when you see it on the screen. There is nothing the matter with Navarro in this picture. He is an excellent actor. When, if ever, his productions are handled by intelligent people, he is going to be a sensational success. Marceline also is very good. She is equal to every demand of a role that has several strong scenes in it. Roy d'Arcy plays a conventional heavy just a little better than a lot of other people would play it. I still have hopes of seeing this really splendid actor in a part that suits him. Marc McDermott contributes a fine characterization to Romance.

Darryl Zanuck Writes a Letter

ARRYL ZANUCK, who shares with Jack Warner the responsibility for the very poor pictures that Warner Brothers turn out, writes me a letter about my review of The Devil's Paradise which appeared some issues ago. I find the letter among some papers I carried off with me to read some time during my rambles. In my review I praised the Curtiz picture on the whole, but I contended that the story was built on a wrong premise. Buster Collier kills a crazy man who attacks him with a bayonet, but instead of offering in his defense at the subsequent court martial that the man was crazy and that it was a question of his life or Collier's, the latter refuses to answer questions and is found guilty of murder. His refusal is based on his fear that Irene Rich's name will become involved in scandal. Of course the whole thing is utterly absurd, but Zanuck defends it. "Of the facts that there had been a struggle," he writes, "and that John Miljan was insane there could be no doubt, but is it necessary for us at the trial to bring up those trivial points?" If I were being tried for murder I would hate to have my counsel whisper to me, "I know that if we present this bit of evidence it will clear you, but is it necessary for us to bring up such a trivial point?" Another point in Zanuck's letter will enlighten criminal lawyers. Apparently when a crazy man attacks you with the intention of exploring your interior with the point of a bayonet you must not defend yourself unless you have an "underlying motive". The fact that you wish to save your life is not sufficient. "When they asked for the underlying motive," Zanuck writes, "Collier consistently refused to answer, which was, naturally, to shield the woman in the case." It is hard to answer an argument as dull as Zanuck's. The whole

point of my objection to the story was that the obvious plea of self defence would have kept any woman's name from entering the case, whereas idiotic questions about "underlying motives" would have been a sure way to drag her in. Self preservation is its own complete defence, and to suggest "underlying motives" in connection with it is absurd. But it is not the only absurdity in Zanuck's letter. Here's another: "I am sorry, though, that Mr. William Russell did not look enough like an Englishman to you. Both of Mr. Russell's parents were born in London, and, for your benefit hereafter, I will have footnotes on the introduction titles, telling the age, place of birth, and ancestry of all actors appearing in our productions." Perhaps from this extract we can get an estimate of the degree of mentality that enters into the Warner output. Here is a man who in a great measure influences the production of a large studio and who argues that a man must be a good English type because his parents were English! If Zanuck were qualified for the position he holds he would know that there are thousands of English actors who have never been outside England who would not be cast as English officers. Some of the best English types on the stage are Americans, and vice versa. Bill Russell might have been born in Picadilly Circus, but that would not alter the fact that there is nothing about him to suggest the British officer. He has neither the appearance, carriage nor smartness that should characterize such a part, something that Zanuck would know if he had that broad, general knowledge that a man should possess to make him a capable supervisor of production.

What Ails Most Warner Pictures

R. ZANUCK has more to say. In another place in this paper I quote him fully and without comment, but here I will set down another sample of his line of thought that will help to explain why the Warner Brothers pictures are so very bad: "However, it appears to me that you have completely solved all the mysteries, as well as the ailments and idiosyncrasies of Mr. Warner and myself. Therefore, inasmuch as you have made such a definite success in this undertaking, I suggest that you forget motion pictures, and pick on an industry which needs the immediate attention of a genius like yourself. . . . However, The Film Spectator is necessary to the industry-and I am sincere when I say this-as what would a Sunday paper be, without its funny sheet?" Mr. Zanuck flatters himself immensely when he suggests that I have made him the subject of study. His confession that he has some ailments confirms a conviction that obtruded itself upon me as I viewed pictures he supervised, and his frank acknowledgement of the importance of the funny sheets seems to enlighten us as to his idea of intellectual diversion. That the Sunday comics are the inspiration for Warner pictures we can believe when we see the pictures, but I must confess that I never was stirred by a funny supplement sufficiently to prompt me to write a long letter for publication in it. I welcome to Spectator pages letters dealing with subjects appropriate to them, and my personality is not included among the appropriate subjects. Ordinarily I ignore letters that make me an issue and publish the others without comment, but I have taken Darryl Zanuck's letter apart and examined it with interest because it is written by a man

high up in production circles. It gives us a glimpse of a personality that is in a position to reflect itself upon the screen, and the glimpse reveals a man without perception enough to be logical and manners enough to be good natured. He and Jack Warner jointly supervise the Warner output and between them they manage to give the public mostly cinematic junk with a Devil's Paradise now and then as a rare and surprising interlude. Along the road I have travelled lately I have viewed two pictures from this studio, The Missing Link and Simple Sis. Both are sorry affairs, unredeemed by any of the virtues that pictures should reflect. But Mr. Zanuck says I am not competent to discuss them. Let me quote from him again: "I don't think I would ever criticize the mill's harness factory, unless I had been inside of same-and I don't think you should criticize, unless you know whereof you speak." Zanuck is engaged in the literary end of a literary art, and if this quotation has any literary merit it is too profound for my poor intellect. He denies me the right to meddle with his occupation of making pictures, but I will be more generous and treat him seriously as a meddler in my occupation of writing. "Same", in the manner in which he uses it in this quotation, is a solecism in which any writer would be ashamed to indulge. It is on a par with "alright" which appears in a title in one of the two pictures I mention above, I forget which. I would like to point out to Zanuck that there is no such word in the English language. It is considered by writers to be the height of lowbrowism. It is not alright for Zanuck to use same. Perhaps he can understand that.

Janet Gaynor Deserves Something Much Better

NE thing that Seventh Heaven establishes is the fact that Janet Gaynor is perhaps the greatest natural actress who ever appeared on the screen. only limit to her possibilities as a public favorite is the degree of common sense possessed by those for whom she makes pictures. When Sol Wurtzel took Irving Cummings' advice and put Janet under contract, he performed a stroke of good business for the Fox organization. When Seventh Heaven is released generally, Janet Gaynor will be hailed by the world as a truly great artist. Unlike most of the other young girls who have achieved success in pictures, Janet's talent is greater than her beauty. It is the kind that lasts. It is a safe prediction that she will reign as a favorite when she is playing old woman parts. If the Fox people were long on brains they would realize the fact that to capitalize her ability she should not be seen in too many pictures, certainly in not more than two a year, and that these two should be such extraordinary ones as Seventh Heaven. But with a disregard for all business principles that a child might be expected to appreciate, Fox is pursuing the exceptionally stupid course of putting her in productions that have no merit, the one sure method of lessening her box-office value. Before Seventh Heaven is released generally Two Girls Wanted will be shown in thousands of houses, thus associating Janet's name with cheap and senseless pictures. To those of us who have seen the great Borzage production, Two Girls Wanted is gratifying, because it reassures us as to the degree of art that Janet can reveal in even a ridiculous part, but as screen entertainment it is about the last word in absolute silliness. It is a sad mixture of grotesque farce. romance, melodrama and rot. It has the framework of what might have been made a passable screen story, but viewed as a vehicle for such an outstanding artist as Janet Gaynor, it is a woeful thing that could not have been made worthy of her ability. It opens with a silly sequence and becomes worse as it progresses. It possibly was selected by one of the University children who occupy such high places in the Fox story counsels, and developed by people whose minds are still more immature. The second time Glenn Tryon sees Janet he proposes to her in a doorway leading from an office, in which half a dozen girls are working, to one in which three men are sitting, making the love scene as devoid of romance as a billiard ball is of hair. A man calling on another to discuss a business deal involving hundreds of thousands of dollars, brings along his niece to meet her fiance, one of the conferees. And after doing such an unheard of thing, he fails to introduce any of the men to the girl, nor does he do anything else to give her visit an air of plausibility. To prevent Tryon being present at a business conference in the morning Ben Bard drugs him the night before, leaving the unconscious hero under the lean limbs of a papier maché tree behind a country club house, a title carefully explaining the exact spot in order that we would not suspect that the bum tree was a little to the left of a livery stable, or perhaps in the rear of a laundry. The acting of Marie Mosquini, Doris Lloyd and Joe Cawthorn are pleasing features of this wholly impossible picture, which by no amount of good acting could be made worthy of Janet Gaynor, as I already have stated. But I suppose Janet is as well off with the Fox organization as she would be with any other. I do not know of any that is conducted in a businesslike manner.

Great Backgrounds for Idiotic Romance

CROSS a background of gorgeous mountain scenery Fox has drawn a screen romance that is positively idiotic. Olive Borden stars in it and the introductory sequences present her as an ill-mannered brat unlike anything human that could be developed in the environment that surrounds her. She is extremely insulting to her father's guest without any reason for her conduct being given. The exteriors were shot in the Canadian Rockies and have great pictorial value, although they do not match in beauty those obtained in the same locale by Irving Cummings when he shot The Country Beyond for the same producer. For going so far afield to bring beauty to the screen Fox is to be commended, but there is no excuse for such a wildly ridiculous story. It is absurd from the first, but achieves the height of asininity when Olive and Lawrence Gray set out in an airplane, and continues the asininity on an ascending scale to an insane ending. Although the youngest school boy knows that two people in an airplane can not make their voices heard above the roar of the engine, Olive and Gray continue during the flight the utterly senseless quarrel they started when they first met. Even a wreck that compels them to resort to their parachutes does not disturb the continuity of the quarrel, as they continue to jabber at one another until they reach the ground. They fall onto the top of a mountain from which they can escape only by means of a rope ladder which Gray constructs. The time lapse is not indicated, but the impression is given that

the two remain on the mountain for some days, subsisting entirely on a few fish which they catch in a lake which is snuggled up there with them. By giving Olive a hearty spanking Gray makes her love him, which is quite as logical as the rest of the story, and Olive cuts loose the rope ladder in order that she may remain on the top of the mountain for ever and ever with the man she loves, even though she is dressed in pajamas and there is nothing to eat. Pajamas, by the way, is the name of the picture. The girl's father starts out to rescue her. He travels in a canoe, and overlooks the sensible course of having a plane locate the missing couple. Olive and Gray see the rescue party approaching and flee into the forest, as they are quite determined to spend eatless eternities in each others' arms in the chilly embrace of mountain peaks. The rescuers walk briskly into the camp, thus designating it as one that can be climbed to without difficulty, but escape from which is possible only by a rope ladder. They find messages, which the action shows were written in a flowing hand, but which the inserts reveal as neatly printed, stating that the young people don't want to be rescued, and the fadeout shows them sublimely happy among the mountain pines. It is hard to believe, but the fact remains that the fadeout gives the impression that the two intend to stay where they are for the rest of their lives. They have no change of clothing and no food, but even when winter comes with its snows and subzero weather they will be there still, locked in each others' arms, true to that love that came to Olive when Lawrence spanked her. Such a picture as Pajamas is a disgrace to screen art. It is inconceivable that it came from the studio that gave us Seventh Heaven.

"The Country Doctor" Is Very Good Indeed

UPERT JULIAN strikes a deep, human note in The Country Doctor. It is not as good a picture as it might have been, but the faults are those of the script, and not of the direction, for only in a few instances of faulty grouping does Julian in any way offend. In the closing shot his friends gather around the old doctor's wheel chair to show their affection for him. None of them stand in front of him, that position being reserved for the motion picture camera. But we can forgive that display of reverence for movie methods in a picture otherwise so splendidly directed. I suppose I might as well do all my fault finding while I am at it and get it over with. A splendid opportunity to do something notable was missed at the very outset of the film. The first shot reproduces with great beauty that famous picture, "The Doctor", the original of which hangs in the Tate gallery, London, where I viewed it. The screen reproduction impressed me more than the original. Instead of bringing the whole noted picture to life, as soon as movement begins it is shown entirely in close-ups, thereby breaking up the beautiful composition. It would have been a striking screen performance to have shown the entire sequence in a long shot. The storm sequence near the end of the picture is pure hokum, cheap stuff that is out of harmony with the fine note the picture strikes. I imagine it is some studio master mind's conception of production value. I hope that whoever thought of it is pleased so well with it that he will be content to retire on his laurels and never inflict such balderdash on us again. But The Country Doctor is

a fine picture. It shows us again what a really capable actor Rudolph Schildkraut is, and the popularity it is attaining throughout the country demonstrates that the old emotions are the best. I have insisted so many times that we need human beings on the screen that it is pleasing to see how well they are received when we get them. Any producer who would give us a series of purely human pictures under such direction as Julian gives The Country Doctor would add greatly to his bank account. The fine, healthy spirit that the picture reflects is exactly what the screen needs, and we can thank the De Mille people for giving us at least one sample of it. Sam de Grasse, looking more like President Coolidge than ever, portrays a heavy with his usual great ability. Junior Coghlan again demonstrates what a fine actor he is. The close-up in which he registers the terror caused by the discovery of his mother's body is a masterly bit that would do credit to any adult artist. Jane Keckley, whom I do not remember having seen before, is a fine type. A close-up of her when she sympathizes with the old doctor upon the loss of the position which he coveted is one of the big moments in the picture. I hope this production will get her somewhere. Gladys Brockwell is pleasing in her short part and Virginia Bradford shows promise. I was not much impressed by Frank Marion, the youthful lover. He is too immature. To Schildkraut and Julian goes the greater part of the credit for the agreeable whole. The picture is full of bits that are examples of splendid direction, such as the reluctance of the dog to leave his old master. All through that dog sequence there was a lump in my throat, which was the greatest tribute I could pay it. I hope De Mille will make so much money out of this picture that he will give us more like it.

Stewart Edward White Has Three Complaints

TEWART EDWARD WHITE, author, philosopher, explorer, big game hunter, and a squire of Hillsboro, a town that has crept beneath the great live oaks near Burlingame and derives huge enjoyment out of being itself, has a picture viewpoint that would be possible only to a man of intelligence who follows a book on philosophy with one dealing with shooting lions in the interior of Africa, both of them written in a charming style that delights the reader who appreciates the good use of English. One would put White down as the kind of man whom pictures would bore, for he is a student still, although a scholar, and brings to the theatre a keener mind than pictures are aimed at. He has lived his own drama; has gone to meet it in wild places where no white man had been before. Four lions charged him at one time in an African jungle. When a lion begins to charge, it's his life or the hunter's, for a live lion never stops. It was up to White to stop all four or be snuffed out himself. He got them, the last one a few feet from the end of the rifle barrel. Reflect on the drama in that, but one incident out of the hundreds that have stirred the existence of the man without taking the gentle tones from his voice or the shyness from his demeanor. With much the same philosophy with which he grants the lion's right to charge him, he grants the screen's right to bore him, a right established by precedent and made inalienable by time. He knows that the romance is going to be developed inadequately, and that all the time honored anachronisms will make their

bows again, consequently he discounts them and enjoys almost any picture. But he has three grievances. One of them is that producers overlook the part that sets play in drama. He thinks sets should be on an ascending scale so as to keep pace with the building drama. He believes that when all sets are of equal magnitude opportunities to accentuate drama are overlooked. There is a lot of merit in White's contention. If the big scene in a picture is staged in the production's most impressive set it will have greater value than would attach to it if the set were but one of a dozen of equal impressiveness. Screen rain storms also intrigue White. Why, he wants to know, must they always be of tropical intensity? There never is a gentle rainfall in the movies, he contends, and never the kind that would occur in the place that it is supposed to. This covers a point in picture criticism that I have overlooked. White is right. There always is a tropical downfall or no rain at all. And at the moment I can not recall a rainfall that was not accompanied by a heavy wind. White's third grievance is the poor punctuation of titles. He does not view it from the standpoint of a stylist in English, a man who sells words and punctuation for a living. He offers the same objection that I have offered scores of times in The Spectator: that the layman, who knows nothing about punctuation, can read a title more quickly if it be punctuated in the manner that general reading has accustomed him to. Nothing in the foregoing must be construed as my endorsement of Stewart Edward White as a cribbage player. On the flyleaf of one of his books I have his written acknowledgement that I walloped him at that game.

Tommyrot About Trend of Public Taste

RADUALLY I am becoming exasperated with my friend, Ed Schallert. A Sunday Los Angeles Times, purchased on a rainy corner in Tacoma, contains another of Ed's charts which purport to show the drift of public taste. He's as bad as motion picture producers, who go at their business backward. There is no such thing as public taste in the sense that producers view it. Schallert wonders how long war stories will last, what will come after comedy teams, and whether college pictures will be popular. There never was a time when the public wanted or did not want to see a war picture; there has been no feeling for or against comedy teams, and college stories, as such, never have been popular or unpopular. Producers have brought the screen to the lowest level ever reached by a vibrant art through just such follies as imagining that the success of a picture set in a certain environment indicated the drift of public taste towards such environment. King Vidor's Big Parade was a success solely because it was a great picture. The fact that it dealt with the war was incidental, and had nothing to do with the picture's success. If this were not true, all pictures dealing with the war would have been equally successful. But our wise producers gave all the credit for the success to the war and began to deal out war pictures which had so little merit that they did not find favor with the public. Whereupon these mental giants declared that the public taste had changed, that war pictures no longer were popular. War pictures could go on forever if they contained the entertainment value that the public is after. The only difficulty in keeping up the pace is that this value

must be on an ascending scale. In the first war picture the environment would interest the public on account of its novelty, and a relatively weak story could get by. By the time the third war picture was viewed the environment would have no longer any entertainment value, and the story would have to stand on its own feet. As long as the stories could do this, just so long would war pictures-or any other kind of pictures-remain popular. If the motion picture industry were manned by people who understood it, it would not be in the mess it is to-day. One would think that those responsible for the mess would arrive at the conclusion that there must be something the matter with the system that produced it. Of course, the producers have their own excuse: that the public taste changes. To get them to realize the truth one must pierce a solid wall of sublime egoism in an effort to reach a brain that isn't there. If they could be taught how to run their business they would dismiss all this public trend rot from their minds and concentrate on the particular story in hand. No matter what subject it deals with, an entertaining story made into a picture that retains its entertaining quality will be a success, and no stupid picture can be successful no matter what its theme or locale is.

British Films Without Tears By CEDRIC BELFRAGE

HATE the idea of the sweet people I have met in Hollywood running their heads into a firm, Old English brick wall. There are offers of tempting proportions coming over from British producers to numbers of people in the Hollywood motion picture business. The advancing tide of culture, or something, is implanting in them a passionate desire to accept these offers. Some players happily wedded to their art here, groan about their position to me in dark corners of the studios, like so many Chekhov characters with their eternal "I want to live—to love," and "When do we go to Moscow?" A few unusual and intelligent pictures have come in from Europe and have apparently produced the impression that any studio in Europe must of necessity be a cradle of Art.

The other day an actress at one of the big studios in Culver City drew me aside, as one cultured person to another, and hoarsed: "I'm stifling here—if you only knew how stifling it is!" The Chekhov heroines who said this generally stifled to death because they could never succeed in raising enough roubles to get to Moscow. It is not the same with motion picture people. They either have or can borrow the fare to anywhere they want to go—and there is nobody to stop them leaving whenever they may be inclined to do so. It is only merciful for one recently emerged from English and European studios to destroy a few common illusions about Art over the Atlantic.

More than sixty films of feature length are now offered to British exhibitors from native studios, or are awaiting trade show. This figure naturally leads outsiders to suppose that a revival has taken place in the prosperity of British production. Actually there has been no such revival, simply because there is no sign of improving quality. Many months of concentrated newspaper publicity for the native producers' woes, by which the English public was informed that it was being Americanized by screen propaganda from Hollywood, produced a forced crop of new capital to bolster up the decrepit local concerns. But the people who were found to put money in the industry saw

their hopes of wealth go the way they have always gone with English pictures—down the drain.

As far as producing good pictures is concerned, England is exactly where she started from. The reason is not capital—for capital is still interested in really sound production enterprise; it is not the weather—for the Riviera is only a few hours away; nor is it studios—for although there is now a scarcity of space there is more than enough room for the handful of competitors, with facilities in several studios equal to Hollywood's.

Back of the whole trouble is the old British cautiousness and conservatism, which makes it impossible for young and new blood to take its proper place in the industry. In England, as in America, the motion picture business attracted at the start a ruffianly and illiterate gang who went into it as a wild gamble because they had failed at everything else. Their gamble was a success, and they stuck, and are still sticking. They have lost investors a pile of money and will lose them plenty more, by present indications, before they are removed. There is still practically no sign of any intelligence and new blood coming into British films.

The difficulty of Hollywood people is that they never see any British pictures, and they are subject to the illusion that English studios are turning out artistic and gentlemanly productions which are far above the heads of the American hoi polloi. If I could get hold of a few recent English pictures, produced in the year of grace A. D. 1927, I could give people who have this illusion a good laugh at their own expense. Could they bull see the masterpieces of Herbert Wilcox, which were distributed here by Paramount to the few theatres that would show them; the spawnings of Carlyle Blackwell, Harley Knoles and Hayes Hunter, three Americans who work in England because nobody here would give them a job sweeping out the studio; the whimsies of Thomas Bentley and Maurice Elvey, Englishmen who came to Hollywood and made asses of themselves; and the English naval and military epics which are pouring forth ever since the success of The Big Parade; could they but see these wonders, they would find plenty of innocent, healthy fun in them.

The last British picture I saw in England was called Second to None, and was a big production made last year in co-operation with the English navy. It was shown at one of the most important west-end theatres. The customers of the theatre either took to weeping into their handkerchiefs or rushed out into the street for air. The first part of the picture showed little Oscar in a Fauntleroy suit and little Madeline with ringlets exchanging childish hugs and saying: "I'll mawwy 'oo when I gwows up." Little Oscar joined the navy and had a lot of clean sport with his jolly sailor friends, while Madeline grew into stately womanhood. No sooner had she done this than there appeared a villain with a Kaiser mustache, who threatened to foreclose on the mortgage unless she became his-wife. At this juncture I passed peacefully away in my sleep, so I cannot tell the rest of the story, though perhaps I can hazard a guess at the conclusion.

The last British picture I saw in America was Herbert Wilcox's Tip Toes, with Dorothy Gish, which put in an appearance at a ten-cent film parlor on the East Side of New York. Will Rogers was in this production, and contributed a good deal to its general tone of despairing melancholy. It was supposed to be an adaptation of a bright

musical comedy which had no story whatever, but for which British National, the producers, paid an enormous sum against no competition from anyone.

(Mr. Belfrage will discuss this subject further in a subsequent number of The Spectator.)

SHOWMANSHIP

By EDWARD J. MONTAGNE Editor-in-Chief Universal Pictures

THE Showman has always been a necessary part of public entertainment. Whenever you see a big crowd, peek behind the scenes and you will see a great Showman, whether it is a Tex Rickard, a David Belasco, or an Aimee McPherson. As soon as our pet industry took on sufficient size to be worthy of his attention, the Showman made his advent into motion pictures, and with his advent bigger and better theatres began to be built.

On the exhibition end, men like Rothapfel and Grauman were the first big showmen to attract attention. By the building of luxurious theatres, by the introduction of cushioned seats, high class musical programmes, and colorful prologues, they lifted the quality of motion pictures. Not that the pictures were actually better, but audiences began to think they were better because they were viewing them under more favorable circumstances. The new audiences created for linema entertainment were of a higher class than the old ustore" crowd; more intelligent and discriminating people, who eventually demanded a high class of picture, and soon the Showman came ambling along to look after the production end.

The old producers, bewildered by the turn of events, accommodatingly stepped back, and younger and more progressive men moved up to take their places. The only producers who survived this revolution were those who were natural-born showmen, men who welcomed the new era because it gave them a broader and more attractive field to work in.

Carl Laemmle was always one of the greatest showmen in pictures. He forced his way into the already trustified industry by the showmanship he displayed in making his first pictures. His fortune was founded on the brilliant and daring showmanship exhibited in the making and handling of the first Broadway run picture, Traffic in Souls. Follow his career and you will find in everything that he does an almost uncanny knowledge of the pulse of the people, which is real showmanship.

Turn whichever way you wish and wherever you see a successful man or woman in this industry, you must bow your head to superb showmanship. Why has Cecil de Mille come to the top as a director and producer? Because in addition to his natural gifts for creation, he is a master showman. He knows the hearts of the people, he keeps abreast of the times, he gives them just what they want. Do you recall the "million dollar" bathrooms in his society pictures for Famous years ago? Do you recall those novel, bizarre sets, which you remembered long after you had forgotten the picture itself? Clever, almost inspired showmanship.

The Showman is here to stay in this industry. The director who wishes to survive must put more showmanship into his pictures. He must realize that the year is 1927, he must study the audiences of 1927, feel them, know them, and photograph his subjects for them. The public attitude towards big themes changes from day to day, and the

director who is able to catch the mood of a present-day audience is certainly going to come closer to hitting the box-office bull's eye than the fellow who is doing his job in the same way that he did it ten years ago.

All along the line, from the director down to the humblest employee the showman is the one who will eventually survive.

Writers must shake off the cobwebs, or take a back seat. As our economic life changes, new themes present themselves, and new viewpoints take the place of old ones. Witness the change of public opinion on the World War in just a few years. We must pull at the heart strings in the same old way, we must not neglect the tear ducts, we cannot forget that people still want to laugh-the tricks are not to be forgotten—but in heaven's name let us change our background and our characters, and our motivation now and then. Separations are not always tragedies. Sometimes separations eventually bring people together into closer relationship, with better understanding and greater love. Yet authors will invariably strive for stark tragedies when treating the divorce theme. Witness Silk Stockings for a modern treatment of the perplexing divorce problem.

The old hackneyed plot, told in the same hackneyed way, is gone forever. The audience is ahead of you. They are fading out before you have ended your first reel. Audiences demand new themes or at least a new treatment of the old ones. Authors must discard the good old stereotyped characters which have done service so long and put new ones on the screen. The radio announcer might have a family somewhere and a few troubles of his own. He is at least more refreshing than the artificial man-abouttown with the Filipino valet and perfumed apartment. There is romance in the life of the little girl who runs the elevator in your office building. Why must it always be a chorus girl or a stenographer, when we tell the story of the working girl?

This is what I mean by showmanship; bringing your story right up to date, putting on the screen new characterizations, in fresh and different backgrounds.

As the writer must keep pace with the years, so must everybody else who contributes in any way to the making of a motion picture. The film editor must feel the tempo of his audience, in order to get the tempo of his picture. The photographer must display his showmanship in the new effects he can obtain. The technical directors should forget the one, two, three locations and sets in their notebooks, and strike out in new pastures. The actors and actresses should study life instead of trying to remember the bag of tricks of somebody else.

Long live the Showman! Without him entertainment would be a very dull and monotonous thing.

THE UNIT SYSTEM By MARY O'HARA

HAVE set forth in two previous articles, a method for injecting into pictures a larger quantity of artistic merit; the simple and logical procedure being to have pictures made from beginning to end by people possessed of the necessary four talents, namely: writer, playwright, director, and photographic artist. And I finished by saying that this would naturally lead to a revival of the unit system.

Upon a successful establishment of the unit system, each

unit made up of the people who really ought to be making pictures—with the logical man or woman at the head of the unit—I base my greatest hopes for the future of pictures.

To begin with, the other method, the factory or department method, is impossible. Let us examine it.

In a certain studio, run, let us say, by Mr. X, fifty pictures are to be made in a year. He puts the production of these fifty pictures into the hands of three supervisors whom he considers efficient. The Spectator makes no bones about stating that most of these supervisors are inefficient and do not know their business. Whether that is so or not is of little importance, because even if they were-even if they were gods or super-men-they could not give the necessary attention and supervision to so many pictures. They are cruelly driven by the necessities of their positions and they suffer in health and general outlook. Their pictures suffer, too-likewise everyone who comes in contact with them. I believe that most of these men live on the ragged edge of suspense, insecurity and dread. To cover this up, they assume an amazing arrogance and pride, some of which may be genuineas human beings have great ability in the art of kidding themselves-but most of which is very shaky. By means of it they pass on to those who labor under them their own anxiety, misery and dread. This horrible uneasiness is the universal atmosphere in which pictures are made. The trouble of one is the trouble of all, since all the activities of the studio impinge upon each other. Everybody's finger is in everybody's pie. A story is shifted from one writer to the other until it seems to the supervisor that sufficient attention has been given it to make it likely



that it is ready for production. Why the last opinion is better than the first or the third it is difficult to say. It is beyond doubt true that many a picture goes into production just because everyone is tired of milling over it—argument has exhausted itself—it ought to be right by this time if it isn't—at least no one could say that sufficient effort has not been expended—start shooting!

Now a picture is a creature of the most delicate adjustments. It needs to be as profoundly, as intimately understood as a child. Some one should have memorized it before production starts. Someone should know why a certain scene-perhaps a small and ineffective sceneof all scenes, must be most perfectly put over; someone should be holding in his mind every scene of the picture, every foot of it, and what is more, the meaning and the significance of every scene to the picture as a wholebefore and while it is being shot. That someone is, presumably, the supervisor. But as things are now, can he do that? Can he give it even a portion of such attention as that? Can he even honestly and fairly be said to supervise it? He can not. He does not attempt it. That is not what he understands by supervision. How much can he do-does he do? He chooses a story which he likes. He chooses a writer whose work he likes. If he has no special favorite, he tries one, or two, or three-and himself gives general directions for combining them into a single whole. He is doing, almost always, several pictures at a time. He is interviewing actors, seeing rushes of the two or three pictures which are in production, supervising the editing of pictures which have been finished. He is almost always oppressed and worried by some one picture which is turning out badly or hopelessly; he is trying to improve it-to doctor it-torn between the hope of rescuing it from "the shelf" and the fear of throwing good money after bad. Over each picture he does manage to throw, it is true a vestige of his own color, his own taste, but only a vestige. In one picture, the subject, or certain angles, or scenes, or titles, or twists, may be really his. The rest is anybody's. All of that careful, responsible watching of every inch of the picture is relegatedto whom? Officially to nobody, because he is the supervisor. But the director assumes that responsibility. Moreover, the writer assumes it, too. The regrettable conflict between directors and writers has grown from this exact cause. Things are going wrong with the picture! Whose fault is it? Whose responsibility? What is to be done? The only thing is to inform the supervisor. This means a "conference". Sometimes it takes days to get a conference with that busy supervisor, who perhaps at this exact time is suffering the tortures of the damned in conference with his boss, the producer, over the failure of some past picture, over excessive production costs, or what have you. Meanwhile the picture stands still! Money pouring out! Eventually the supervisor decides the point at issue, perhaps the director's way, perhaps the writer's way, perhaps his own way. Often in these conferences, held always under terrible pressure of time, there is no real meeting of minds. The trouble is not clearly set forth, understood, thrashed out and adjusted; it is merely decided. And the supervisor hurries on to his next worry.

In my opinion, one-man-supervision of eighteen or twenty pictures a year—or even a dozen, or eight, is a job that simply can not be well done. The pictures actually go without the supervision they need. In a certain peculiar sense, this is recognized and admitted, because supervisors are not actually held responsible for the pictures. It is as if the producer sets them an impossible job, and when they fail, and blame someone else—writer, or director, or story, or star—their excuse is accepted to a certain extent. So few good pictures are made that producers seem to take it for granted that it is an almost impossible thing to achieve. There has to be perfect performance and co-operation on the part of so many people that it is almost certain that someone will misbehave and spoil the picture. If the producer should say, "But you are the supervisor. Why did you permit this?" the supervisor can answer, "Well, it was so and so who did it—you know what a big name he has—I expected him to know his business—", etc.

Passing the buck! Alibis! Pictures are made of them. That is, bad pictures. When a triumph comes forth, how eager is a supervisor to claim, "I did it!"

One can't begrudge it to them. They have so few triumphs.

With the unit system this could not occur. Responsibility would be placed beyond any argument. What a relief this should be to the producer!

One other point against the "factory" system. To whatever extent those three men do impose their own minds and opinions upon the studio output, to that extent the pictures are brought to a distressing uniformity. Is the creation of pictures different to the creation of any other artistic product? Sculpture? Painting? Music? Different composers, for instance, Debussey, Grieg or Beetho-





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ven, have such definite and individual styles that in listening to their music one instantly recognizes the composer. But with pictures—is there any cry more frequently heard than that "pictures are all alike?"

If the unit system were developed to the full extent of its possibilities, different styles of picture-making would appear. A certain unit would discover a talent for making fantasies. Another, farces and comedies, another authentic historical films, another religious or metaphysical works, and of course the majority, fiction and drama. Original ideas would have free scope. There would be competition between the various units to discover fresh and interesting angles. In fact, there would be doubtless many freak pictures. I imagine that Mr. X. and all of his ilk would sometimes tear their hair when they saw pictures of their very own studio saying strange things that have not been said in pictures before and saying them in new ways, different from the ways they have become so comfortably familiar with. Personally, I would walk a mile to see a freak picture; but as I do not believe it would be generally acceptable to the public, I would not recommend it for production. Inter-unit competition, aiming at boxoffice as well as artistic success, would discourage abnormalities while encouraging originality.

I do not see how it can be denied that the unit system is in theory the right one. It can be argued that it has been tried and bad pictures turned out; that it is in use here and there and not doing better work than where a few men govern an immense output. But that does not mean that the system is wrong. It simply means that the wrong men are at the head of the units. Mr. X. being a business man himself, and not an artist, feels that when he has found another good business man to place at the head of his unit, he has done just what should be done to insure success. Upon that fallacy rests the failure of the unit system up to date. A good business man can attend to business; he can arrange schedules; hire and fire; contract for sets, actors, props and what-nots; but he can not decide what ought and what ought not to go into the picture.

This brings me to another topic, namely, the unit supervisor, with which I will deal in another article.

"People vs. M. P. Director"

By HARRY O. HOYT

(The following is a transcript from a local police court record.)

Judge Beaton: "I am ready to listen to the arguments of the counsel."

Prosecuting Attorney Hays: "If it please Your Honor, I think it is foolish for me to talk"—(Cries of "Hear! Hear!" from the Spectators) "that is, I think it unnecessary."

Judge Beaton: "Suits me perfectly!"

P. A. Hays: "There lie against this defendant seven charges. First, you have heard the author testify that he did write a story that in every way was a perfect and lovely thing. It had in it that freshness which could come only from youthful genius. It had thematically the strength of Gibraltar. It had characters winnowed from life. It had action fresh and unhackneyed and plot that left his friends to whom he read it searching the dictionary for adjectives with which to describe its superlative qualities.

"You have heard him say, Your Honor, that the theme may have been as strong as the Rock itself, but that was no insurance. That dummies have been substituted for his flesh and blood characters, that the action was reduced to Formula C1267 and K11, and that the plot could best be described in the words of his eight-year-old son who in seeing the picture for the first time remarked: 'Daddy, those weren't the names of the characters the last time we saw this picture'.

"Your Honor, you have heard the cameraman testify that if he had not given him the lighting and set-ups he did, the defendant would have been out of a job after the first day's rushes.

"You have heard the supervisor say that the defendant didn't know what it was all about and he would have fired him and directed the picture himself but he had a couple of other companies to handle and could not find the time.

"And the cast has sworn on oath that the defendant didn't know an entrance from an exit—that they directed themselves and suggested dozens of original bits of business which the director in his stupidity discarded.

"The Film Editor has told you that were it not for his ability at trick-cutting they could not have put the picture together at all.

"The title writer's sworn statement was that he saved the picture with a knockout set of titles.

"And finally, the producer on the stand has testified that the defendant imagined he was making a picture for the Government and that all he had to do was to unlock the mint and take what he wanted and spend it. That it was his certain belief while they were away on location the defendant spent his time skipping dollars on the water.

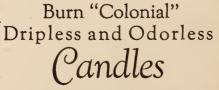
"I ask, Your Honor, in view of this testimony, that you sentence him for life on every count and make the terms run consecutively."

(Applause and cries of "Hear! Hear!" from the Spectators.)

D. A. Hazelhurst, for the Defendant: "Your Honor, we have placed but one witness on the stand and that is the defendant's assistant—as he knows practically everything. Other witnesses were unnecessary.

"You have heard him tell you that while reading the 'Odessy' in the original Greek the other night he ran across the plot that the author used. He quoted to prove that Cervantes, Schiller, Dostoievski, De Maurier, and Shakespeare subsequently borrowed this plot for their own use.

"He has sworn that the cameraman thought the camera was some kind of a puzzle to be taken apart and put to-



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gether. That the supervisor couldn't pronounce words of more than two syllables and didn't know what script was being shot as he hadn't read it.

"That the Cast imagined this picture was being produced for experimental purposes to assist them in trying out various make-ups and costumes and expected to be paid for being taught how to act. He has told you that the Film Editor came from a ribbon counter and all he knew was footage.

"That the title writer had cut up a copy of Joe Miller's joke book and kept the pieces in a bag from which he drew at random for the titles. That the producer squawked every time a location lunch ran over ten cents and charged the company a hundred dollars a day for his Rolls Royce when they could have rented a good car for ten dollars.

"That the defendant to his certain knowledge worked on an average of twenty-two hours a day; was a master dramatist; as an actor that Broadway was waiting for him with open arms—and above all, he had never known him to make a mistake in his life.

"With this categorical denial by the man who knows the defendant best, we rest our case."

Judge Beaton: "How about the punctuation of the titles?"

P. A. Hays: "They are good motion picture form."

D. A. Hazelhurst: "I object. The counsel for the State hasn't qualified as a motion picture expert."

P. A. Hays: "Well, I have letters praising-"

Judge Beaton: "I shall have someone see this picture and then I'll write my opinion."

Defendant: "Please, You Honor, can I say a word?"

Judge Beaton: "You may—I don't know if you can."

Defendant: "The picture made a million dollar profit."

Judge Beaton: "What! A million dollar profit? Then
my course is clear—I sentence the people to be hung!"

GEORGE NICHOLLS

During the last year or two the scythe of death has hewn a large swath in the ranks of the motion picture industry. The latest of the old timers to cross the divide is George Nicholls, one of the men who has stood by pictures since their inception, and who has striven to uphold their best traditions. Nicholls directed the first eight of Charlie Chaplin's original pictures and the first twelve of Roscoe Arbuckle's. He was instrumental in giving James Cruze and Erich von Stroheim their first chance in the industry, and he also directed in the early days such people as Kathlyn Williams, Seena Owen, Edwin Carewe, William Russell, Lew Cody and Earl Foxe. His own last appearances were in White Gold, directed by William Howard, and von Stroheim's Wedding March, which has yet to be released. His characterizations, similar to those of George Fawcett, were mainly of sympathetic fathers, such as the old miner in White Flannels, opposite Louise Dresser, a typical part which, with its subtle flashes of humor, endeared him to his audiences. For the past five months George Nicholls has been gamely fighting for his life, but the odds against him were too strong. His last request was that he should not be forgotten, a request which, if he can look back through the veil, he will see is granted without question in the minds and hearts of those who have known and loved pictures since they first flickered across the crude little screens of the world fifteen or so years ago.

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STORY OF THE BOX-OFFICE

By NORMAN WEBB

Since the original story of the boxoffice was published in the August 6th issue of The Spectator and the ratings of the individual personnel of the industry in the following issue, many new pictures have been released and many new box-office figures have been received. Thus we are publishing new rating lists not only on pictures but also on supervisors, directors, writers, stars and featured players. Due to limited space it is impossible to cover the personnel of the entire industry. So, in this issue we are only publishing the sixty top-notchers of each division.

In the listing of the pictures we have rated the fourteen road shows in order of the biggest grossers and the greatest length of run. What Price Glory has advanced most rapidly and now occupies the position of the second best money-maker. Many sincere critics, as well as people in the industry, are of the opinion that The Big Parade's being released first took the edge off of the box-office value of What Price Glory, at the same time claiming that the latter picture is equally good, and some say even better.

Old Ironsides, now playing tenth among the road-shows, continues to be the prize flop. The four road-shows listed below Old Ironsides, namely The Garden of Allah, Les Miserables, The Student Prince and Sunrise, have just started their runs in the last week or two and so it is rather hard to determine just yet how well they will stand

Since we published the last rating list two New York road-shows, When a Man Loves and Annie Laurie, have been withdrawn and placed on the boxoffice list as they are now generally released. John Barrymore's follow-up on Don Juan has not held up as well as expected and it has dropped to 91 per cent. capacity, and yet it has fared much better than his first United Artists' release The Beloved Rogue, which only held to 85 per cent. capacity business. Annie Laurie is holding fairly well at 86 per cent, but it is really too early to say just how well this picture will line up at the box-office.

The most remarkable thing about the road-show list is that while Vidor's Big Parade heads the list-as this is the only production that has grossed over \$7,000,000, \$2,000,000 of which was taken in at one theatre—it was also the least expensive to produce. Congratulations, and more power to King Vidor and his associates.

SUPERVISORS

Our supervisors' rating list has many new names in this listing. However there were several supervisors on whom we were unable to get sufficient dope and figures before. Also two new releases have brought forth the names of two new supervisors.

These are College, 79 per cent., supervised by Harry Brand for Joe Schenck, and Service for Ladies, 80 per cent., supervised by Barney Glazer for Para-

Joe Schenck can be very thankful that he made Harry Brand supervisor on the Buster Keaton unit. Previous to College Keaton had been running his own show, which resulted in two of the worst flops Buster has appeared in,-namely Battling Butler and The General. Brand's supervision of the Keaton unit has brought him back to the box-office stronger than ever and right at the very critical moment, for

20 Fritz Lang.....

secutive flop he would have been out in the cold.

Barney Glazer's supervision of the Adolphe Menjou unit has been quite successful, as Service for Ladies has been doing quite good business. Glazer, who has just completed a very successful supervision of Emil Jannings' last production, The Street of Sin, evidently is not very crazy about supervising pictures as he is now confining his attention solely to writing.

Sol Wurtzel, whose title reads general superintendent of the William Fox West Coast studios, has evidently noticed how successful the supervising

58 J. Franklin Poland...... 59 Byron Morgan..... 60 Jas. Ashmore Creelman...

if =	Buster had produced	a t	hird con-system has	bee	n at the United Artists,		
PRODUCTIONS							
1	Big ParadeRoad Show		Per cent.		Per cent.		
2	What Price Glory " "	12	Hula 97	36	Eagle 88		
	Ben Hur " "		La Boheme		Resurrection 87		
	Don Juan " "		For Heaven's Sake 96		Kiki		
	King of Kings " "		Night of Love 95	39	McFadden's Flats 87		
	Beau Geste " "		Behind the Front 94	40	Annie Laurie 86		
	Seventh Heaven " "		Camille	41	Scarlet Letter 86		
	Wings " "		Volga Boatman	42	Twelve Miles Out 86		
	Patent L'ther Kid " "		Sea Beast 83		Naughty But Nice 86		
	Old Ironsides " "		Bardelys 92	44	Way of All Flesh 86		
	Garden of Allah " "	21	Better 'Ole 91	45	Sorrows of Satin 85		
	Les Miserables " "		Temptress 91	46	Unholy Three 85		
	Student Prince " "		Annie Roonie 91	47	Three Faces East		
	Sunrise" "		Magic Flame	48	Three Bad Men 85		
	Per cent.	25	When a Man Loves 91		Missing Link 85		
1	Son of the Sheik111	26	Quarterback		Valencia		
2	Freshman110		Barhara Worth 90	51	Campus Flirt		
_	Black Pirate 105		Unknown	52	Ace of Cads		
	Flesh and the Devil105		Dark Angel 90	53	Beloved Rogue		
	We're in the Navy Now103		Four Horsemen (re-issue) 90		Irene		
	Kid Brother102	31	Lady Windemere's Fan 90	55			
7	Tell It to the Marines100	32	Mr. Wu 89	56			
	Merry Widow100		Mare Nostrum 89	57			
a	Stella Dallas100		Fireman Save My Child 88		Hotel Imperial 83		
	Underworld100		Fine Manners 88	59			
	It99	33	rine Manners 00		Mockery 82		
• •				00	MIOCRETY		
			WRITERS				
	Per cent.		Per cent.		Per cent.		
	Fred De Gresac100		Forest Halsey 80	41	Julien Josephson		
2	Bess Meredyth 93		Chandler Sprague 80	42	Willis Goldheck 76		
3	Laurence Stallings 91	23	Jack Cunningham 80	43	Darryl F. Zanuck 76		
4	Harry Behn	24	June Mathis 80	44	Al Cohn 76		
5	Monty Brice 91	25	Jeannie McPherson 79	45	Chas. Logue 76		
6	Frances Marion 90	26	Jules Furthman 79	46	Paul Bern 75		
7	John McDermott 87	27	Luther Reed 78	47	Josephine Lovett 75		
8	Lenore Coffee 86	28	Ray Harris 78	48	C. Gardner Sullivan 75		
9	Dorothy Farnum	29	A. P. Younger 78	49			
10	Elliott Clawson 85		Carey Wilson 78	50	Becky Gardiner 75		
11	Hans Kraley 84		Channing Pollock	51	J. Shelhy Hamilton 75		
	Ben Glazer 84		Ben Hecht 77	52	Byron Morgan 75		
13	John Russell 84		Lorna Moon 77	53			
14	Ted Browning 84		Pierre Collings 77	54	Agnes Christine Johnson 75		
15	Winifred Dunn 84		Lloyd Corrigan 77				
16	H. Loring, L. Lighton, 84	36	Roland West 77				
17	H. Loring, L. Lighton 84 Waldemar Young 82		Charles Furthman 77		Douglas Furber74		
18	E. Richard Shayer 81		Elinor Glynn 77		J. Franklin Poland 74		
19	Louise Long 80		Paul Schofield		Byron Morgan 74		
20	Ethel Dougherty 80			60	Jas. Ashmore Creelman 74		

	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·							
	DIRECTORS							
	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.					
1	King Vidor100	21 Frank Borzage 80	41 Rex Ingram 77					
	Fred Nihlo 97	22 Herbert Brenon 80	42 Alex. Korda 76					
	Clarence Brown 92	23 John Rohertson 80	43 Hohart Henley 76					
4	Cecil B. de Mille 91	24 Joseph von Sternherg 80	44 Frank Lloyd 76					
	Geo. FitzMaurice 90	25 Will Nigh 80	45 Frank Strayer 76					
6	Eddie Sutherland 88	26 Mal St. Clair 79	46 Monta Bell 76					
7	Alan Crosland 88	27 Roland West 79	47 Jack Conway 76					
8	Henry King 86	28 Harry Pollard 79	48 Sam Taylor 76					
	Ernst Luhitsh 86	29 D. W. Griffith 78	49 Richard Rosson 76					
	Von Stroheim 85	30 Edwin Carewe 78	50 E. A. Dupont 76					
1	Tod Browning 84	31 Al Santell 78	51 Al Parker 75					
	Victor Seastrom 83	32 Henry d'Arrast 78	52 Jack Ford 75					
	R. A. Walsh 83	33 Luther Reed 78	53 Sam Wood 74					
4	Mauritz Stiller83	34 Chuck Reisner 78	54 Art Rosson 74					
5	Victor Flemming 83	35 Monty Brice 78	55 Eddie Cline 74					
6	Clarence Badger 82	36 F. W. Murnau 77	56 Al Green					
	James Cruze 82	37 Richard Wallace 77	57 Benj. Chistiansen 74					
	Syd Franklin	38 Billy Wellman 77	58 Howard Hawks 74					
	Millard Webh 81	39 Allan Dwan 77	59 Bill Howard					
	Fritz Lang 81	40 Bill Beaudine 77	60 Ed. Sedgewick74					

M.-G.-M. and First National Studios, and has appointed three supervisors at his plant, with more to follow upon the arrival of Winnie Sheehan from New York next week. The three appointed so far are Kenneth Hawks, Phillip Klein and William Conselman.

B. P. Schulberg has made several changes in his supervising system at the Paramount studios and mostly for the worse. Besides Barney Glazer having discontinued supervising, Ralph Block and Lucien Hubbard have both resigned their positions as supervisors. Since Block and Hubbard have both very good box-office ratings it was very poor policy on the part of Schulberg to allow these two experts to get away from the Paramount fold, and it was still worse to appoint a man with such a poor box-office record as J. B. Bachman as supervisor on the Emil Jannings' unit just because Bachman was a very good personal friend of his. Lloyd Sheldon, 80 per cent., and

Per cent.

26 27

3.3

 Mary Astor...
 60

 Noah Beery...
 66

 Lars Hansen...
 66

 Louise Brooks...
 66

 Ernest Torrence...
 66

 English Pools...
 66

Irving Thalberg 89
John Considine Jr. 88
Sam Goldwyn 88
Ben Schulberg 81

Winnie Sheehan 80 Lloyd Sheldon 80

 5 Winnie Sheehan
 80

 6 Lloyd Sheldon
 80

 7 Ralph Block
 79

 8 Eric Pommer
 79

 9 Al Rockett
 79

 10 Hector Turnbull
 79

 11 Jack Warner
 78

 12 Julian Johnston
 78

 13 Ben Glazer
 78

 14 Lucien Hubbard
 78

 15 John McCormack
 77

 16 Carey Wilson
 77

 17 Wm, le Baron
 76

Wm. le Baron..... 76

Louis Lighton, 75 per cent, are both continuing to supervise four Para-mount units, with Hector Turnbull and Milton Hoffman supervising spe-

The newest addition to the Schulberg supervisor's system is Bennie Zeidman, 75 per cent., who was formerly with the John Barrymore company and who will now supervise the Richard Dix and Zane Gray pictures for Paramount.

One of the most rapid advances on the supervisor's list is Irving Thalberg's right-hand man, Bernie Hyman. His two recent box-office hits, Slide Kelly Slide, 77 per cent., and Twelve Miles Out, 86 per cent., have both registered exceptionally well, bringing his average up from 71 to 76 per cent.

DIRECTORS

Several new releases have both raised and lowered the standings of many of our most prominent directors.

Among the new directors whose names were not published before due to lack of recent releases are Joe von Sternberg, 80 per cent., Henry D'Arrast, 78 per cent., Alexander Korda, 76 per cent., and Benjamin Christiansen, 74 per cent.

Although Ben Schulberg has made quite a few bad moves recently with his supervising system, he has done very well with his directorial staff. Four of Paramount's ace directors, namely Maurice Stiller, 83 per cent., Joe von Sternberg, 80 per cent., Harry D'Arrast, 78 per cent., and Billy Wellman, 77 per cent., were all previously employed by M.-G.-M., and yet not one of them had a single box-office picture to his credit under the Thalberg regime. Stiller was withdrawn from The Temptress after the picture was three weeks in production and his contract cancelled. D'Arrast was on the M.-G.-M. lot for almost a year and was never given an opportunity to do anything, and both Joe von Sternberg and Wellman made two of M.G.M.'s 1925 prize-flop pictures, The Exquisite Sinner and The Boob, respectively.

Von Sternberg's career is particularly interesting. Following his bad break with M.-G.-M., he moved his megaphone to Charles Chaplin's studio where he directed Edna Purviance in The Seagull. But Chaplin evidently did not think very much of this picture for he never released it. Production experts seemed to think that Schulberg was taking a great risk when he placed von Sternberg under contract to write and direct for Paramount. Yet his Underworld has turned out to be the biggest money-maker on the 1927 Paramount program. Von Sternberg can now be classed with the many other successful directors who have been promoted from the ranks of the cutting-room.

Harry D'Arrast, like Monta Bell, is a Charles Chaplin protege, for he also served as an aide to the great genius on his sophisticated drama, A Woman of Paris, featuring Adolphe Menjou. After wasting a lot of time on the M.-G.-M. lot D'Arrast finally met Menjou again and was given a chance to direct him in Service for Ladies, which has just been released, and, as previously mentioned, is quite a decided box-office success. D'Arrast has just completed directing Menjou in A

Gentleman of Paris and has again been so successful that Schulberg has assigned him permanently to the Menjou

 Marion Nixon
 63

 Jack Holt
 62

 Zasu Pitts
 62

 36 Ray Schrock.
 70

 37 Bertram Milhauser.
 70

 38 Sam Rork.
 68

 39 Robert Kane.
 68

 40 Sol Wurtzel.
 68

 41 J. D. Williams.
 68

 42 Frank Griffin.
 68

 43 Earl Hudson.
 68

Earl Hudson...... 68

Jack Coogan Sr. 68
June Mathis 67
F. McGrew Willis 67

F. McGrew Willis
Mike Levee 67
Ray Rockett 67

48 Ray Rockett. 67 49 Wild Gunning. 65 50 C. C. Burr. 63 51 Harry "Joe" Brown. 62 52 J. G. Bachman. 59

53

45 June

WRITERS

According to the letters, wires and 'phone calls we have been receiving our writers' ratings seem to be creating the most disturbance in the picture colony. Accordingly I have been very careful in selecting the sixty most successful box-office writers and have gone over each individual's past releases and checked the figures on them.

The overwhelming success of Underworld has brought in two new names with very high box-office ratings. They are Robert Lee, who wrote the

		SIARS	
	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.
- 1	Chas. Chaplin100	25 Buster Keaton	
	Douglas Fairbanks100	26 Ramon Navarro 78 51 Rod La Rocque	
	Harold Lloyd100	27 Richard Barthelmess 77 52 Jetta Goudal	
	Rudolph Valentino 96	28 Pola Negri	
	John Barrymore 94	29 Mae Murray	
		30 Constance Talmadge 75 55 Geo. Bancroft	
	Norma Talmadge 93		
	Lon Chaney 90	31 Douglas McLean	
	Clara Bow 88	32 Corinne Griffith	
	Wallace Beery 87	33 Milton Sills 74 58 Marie Prevost	
10	John Gilbert 86	34 Thomas Meighan 74 59 Norman Kerry	
	Greta Garbo 86	35 Billie Dove	
	Lillian Gish 86	36 Harry Langdon 73 61 Wm. Boyd	
	Ronald Colman 85	37 Reginald Denny	
	Colleen Moore 84	38 Charlie Murray	
15	Syd Chaplin 82	39 Dolores Del Rio 73 64 Mae McAvoy	
16	Richard Dix 81	40 Gilda Gray 73 65 Janet Gaynor	
17	Mary Pickford 81	41 Florence Vidor 73 66 Phyllis Haver	66
18	Emil Jannings 81	42 Esther Ralston	65
	Marion Davies 80	43 Ray Griffith 72 68 Louise Fazenda	65
20	Vilma Banky 80	44 Wm. Haines 72 69 Vera Reynolds	64
	Adolphe Menjou 80	45 Dolores Costello	
	Gloria Swanson 80	46 Raymond Hatton 71 71 Johnny Hines	
	Bebe Daniels 79	47 Madge Bellamy 70 72 Monty Banks	
	Norma Shearer 79	48 Monte Blue	
	Troiling Discurding 17	49 Eddie Cantor	
		17 Dayle Called 70	
		FEATURED PLAYERS	
	D		D
-	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.
	Antonio Moreno	21 Geo. Sydney 65 41 Belle Bennett	
	Joan Crawford 67	22 Alice Terry	
	Jack Mulhall 67	23 Ches. Conklin	
	Lois Moran 67	24 Lawrence Gray 65 44 Claire Windsor	
	Renee Adoree 67	25 Victor MacLaglen 65 45 Blanche Sweet	
	Lew Cody 67	26 Edmund Lowe 65 46 Glenn Tryon	
	Clive Brook	27 Pauline Starke	
	Dorothy Mackaill 66	28 Sally O'Neil 65 48 Gary Cooper	
9	Charlie Ray 66	29 Leon Errol 64 49 Jean Hersholt	
	Louise Dresser	30 Chas. Farrell	63
11	Lloyd Hughes 66	31 Aileen Pringle 64 51 Buster Collier	63
12	Mary Astor 66	32 Betty Bronson 64 52 Marion Nixon	63
	Noah Reery 66	22 Discardo Contes 64 52 Tools Holt	

 32 Betty Bronson
 64

 33 Ricardo Cortez
 64

 34 Ford Sterling
 64

 35 Lya De Putti
 64

 36 Neil Hamilton
 64

 37 Conrad Nagel
 64

 38 Mary Brian
 64

 39 Lois Wilson
 64

 40 Betty Compson
 64

SUPERVISORS

 Bernie Fineman
 73

 C. Gardiner Sullivan
 72

 J. Boyce Smith
 72

 J. Bryce Smith
 72

 Hunt Stromber
 72

 Hunt Stromber
 71

 Henry Hennington
 71

 Charlie Rogers
 71

 Al Christie
 70

 Joe Engle
 70

 Henry Hobart
 70

 Eddie Montaigne
 70

Per cent.

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continuity, and Charlie Furthman, who wrote the adaptation.

Chandler Sprague, a noted ex-newspaper man, who joined the film colony not so long ago, is also coming into much prominence as a box-office writer. He wrote the adaptation of Service for Ladies and Camille.

June Mathis' last script before she passed on, The Magic Flame, has raised her rating considerably, as this picture is doing good business. Miss Mathis, while a failure as a supervisor, was successful as a writer and will always be remembered by the industry for several of her literary masterpieces, particularly The Four Horsemen, Ben Hur and Irene.

Monty Brice, the brother of the famous Fanny and better known locally as one of the principal writers of the Beery-Hatton comedy series, has jumped up to fifth place on the writers' list. Monty gave up writing for a while and directed Wally Beery in Casey at the Bat. But because Beery has to stand up alone in Casey after Ray Hatton was foolishly withdrawn from the cast by Schulberg, it suffered considerably at the box-office. Therefore, Schulberg evidently figured that Brice was a better writer than director and put him back in the scenario department. But whichever way you figure it out, Brice knows his box-office either as a director or as a writer, and much credit for the success of the Beery-Hatton team is due directly to him.

Lloyd Corrigan, who has been particularly identified with Ray Griffith's and Bebe Daniels' scripts at the Paramount studio, is both the author and scenarist on Bebe's latest release, Swim Girl Swim. Because of very few advanced bookings we have received very few box-office figures as yet on Swim Girl Swim, but if the rest of the figures are as strong as the ones already received it looks as if Bebe may top The Campus Flirt, her best to date.

CT A D

STARS Because there are only seventy-two stars in the industry, we are making an exception with this list and publishing it in its entirety. It is interesting to note that Paramount and Fox have contributed one star each to this list since it was last published. Paramount has just taken George Bancroft's name from the list of featured players by announcing that he will be starred immediately in Joseph Con-rad's novel Victory. Stardom is cer-tainly due for Bancroft after the many fine performances he has given in such pictures as The Pony Express, White Gold, The Rough Riders and Old Ironsides. His wonderful portrayal of the square shooting crook, who always stood by his pals, in Underworld has increased his popularity and fan-mail to such an extent that Paramount is probably doing the right thing in starring him, as he can truly be called "a star by public demand"

Likewise Fox has also placed Janet Gaynor's name on the starring list, because of the sensation she created in her portrayal of Diane in Seventh Heaven. Personally I believe that Winnie Sheehan is forcing his little protege to stardom too rapidly. Although a true sensation in Seventh Heaven, this picture has only been exhibited in a few key cities, and, furthermore, Janet has had far too few releases of sufficient importance to establish her with the public. Janet's first starring picture, Two Girls Wanted, is now being released, and it will be of much interest to see just how it fares at the box-office.

Among the others who are making the most rapid strides in their recent releases are Norma Talmadge, Clara Bow, Jack Gilbert, Colleen Moore, Richard Dix, Emil Jannings, Buster Keaton and Billie Dove. Probably the most sensational rise of all of these is that of Emil Jannings. Jannings' last European release, Variety, averaged 77 per cent. capacity, while his first American-made release, The Way of All Flesh, is playing to 86 per cent. capacity, and is still building, although it was a box-office flop locally at the Criterion Theatre.

The great popularity of Ronald Colman and Vilma Banky is again proven by the success of The Magic Flame at the box-office. They are now working on their last picture together, Leatherface, under Fred Niblo's direction. Thereafter Sam Goldwyn plans to star them separately and is now scouting for stories. There is no doubt that they will be very successful as individual United Artists' stars, but it will be very interesting to see just how strong their individual draw really is. Colman of course is much stronger, and especially after the general release of Beau Geste. Since Miss Banky was imported from Hungary three years ago by Sam Goldwyn, she has only appeared in six pictures, two opposite the late Rudolph Valentino and the other four with Colman, yet the six releases have all been such big box-office hits that Miss

Banky is certinly due for stardom.

On the entire starring list of seventy-two names there are only seven who are not actually employed in screening stories at present. These are Mae Murray, Douglas McLean, Ray Griffith, Jetta Goudal, Eddie Cantor, Jackie Coogan and Viola Dana. Eddie Cantor having proven a flop in pictures, has returned to the New York stage. Jackie Coogan, having completed his M.-G.-M. contract, is returning to school, and Viola Dana has retired on account of illness. Of the other four stars mentioned above, three are now considering new contracts, but none has signed as yet.

Mae Murray has always been, and still is, a good box-office bet, as was recently proven by Valencia, which although a very poor production held up on the strength of her name. But since she has a much better offer to return to the New York stage as the star of her own review at a tremendous salary and a cut in the profits, she will probably accept the latter.

Doug McLean and Ray Griffith are both considering several local offers as well as propositions from British National Pictures, who by the way have just released Dorothy Gish and signed Syd Chaplin.

As for Jetta Goudal, I doubt if any producer will be in a very big hurry to sign her up. When Cecil B. de Mille pulled out of the Paramount organization some two and a half years ago, taking Miss Goudal with him, the executives of that company expressed their opinion of her temperament by saying: "Well, thank God she's gone!"

Ever since then the executives, supervisors, directors and writers of the De Mille studio have been battling the Goudal temperament in an effort to please her and yet also satisfy the demands of the box-office, but now they



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SCENARIST

((2))))

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have given her up for the last time, and consequently have given the starring role in her new production to Jacqueline Logan on the strength of her characterization of Mary Magdalene in The King of Kings.

FEATURED PLAYERS

In glancing over our featured players it is readily seen that many of our near-stars have been gaining, while others have been falling away as boxoffice draws so rapidly that the demand for their services is getting less and less.

Among the most rapid climbers in popularity since our last featured players' list was published are members of the Paramount Stock Company: Clive Brook, Evelyn Brent, James Hall and Louise Brooks. The great success of Underworld, besides promoting Bancroft to stardom, has greatly enhanced the box-office value of Clive Brook and Evelyn Brent and has permanently established their names with the film fans.

Both James Hall and Louise Brooks have been appearing in numerous Paramount releases for the past two years in which they have gained considerable popularity. It was not until the release of their recent box-office success, Rolled Stockings, that their real value was proven. Accordingly, Schulberg has just renewed Miss Brooks' contract, while James Hall's contract still has some time to run.

For some reason or other Schulberg seems to be farming Hall out to other studios a great deal. He is now working in a Fox picture, after which, I understand, he is to report to First National for a lead with Colleen Moore. This should be a good move for Hall's nonularity because the more good programs a star or featured player appears in, the more first-run houses he will get a "break" in. In other words Hall's pictures, besides running in the Publix houses, will now also appear in the Fox and First National houses. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why the "farming-out" policy has become such a popular practice in the Hollywood studios.

It is of special interest to note that on the featured players' list are twelve names of people who were once big stars and who are now gradually slipping away as box-office draws. These players, in accordance with their present standing are: Alice Terry, Pauline Stark, Betty Bronson, Betty Compson, Bert Lytell, Priscilla Dean, Conway Tearle, Alice Joyce, Jack Holt, Alma Rubens, Claire Windsor and Blanche Sweet.

With the exception of Betty Bronson all of these former stars have had their run of popularity over the last eight or nine years and are gradually fading out of the picture. Miss Bronson's case is quite different and rather sad. Rushed into publicity when Jesse Lasky selected her as the Peter Pan girl, indications were that she had a great future. But stars can't just be pushed on the public, regardless of how much publicity they receive, as William Randolph Hearst has also

found out. Miss Bronson's last release, Ritzy, in which picture she was starred by Paramount, proved that she was not there as a box-office star. Accordingly, Schulberg has just cast her

for leads in Westerns and is now farming her out to Warner's, which probably won't do her any good after the way they have been handling Dolores Costello lately.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By DONALD BEATON - The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

NE of the most striking books I have read in a long time is Cannibal Nights by Captain H. E. Raabe. The author's experiences as a trader in the South Seas make up the story, so there is no particular plot. About the best thing is the vivid description of a cannibal feast that the author attended, not as an edible, however. He had the good sense not to hurry through that part of the story. Maybe I'm a savage at heart, but the feast didn't seem very revolting; and it was certainly very interesting.

It is apparent in several places that the author is an amateur at story-telling, but on the whole the story is very well and vigorously written. At the beginning of the story, Captain Raabe gave the impression tht he was going to tell more than he did. If he had told in detail about his years with Bully Hayes, a South Sea pirate, the story would have been a great deal more interesting. Maybe he saved that part of his life to put in another book. Such a book would be every bit as interesting as Cannibal Nights, which itself is a very good book.

THE only original thing in Firemen Save My Child! was the schoolroom sequence at the very beginning. The rest of the picture was the same old trash that Beery and Hatton have done in all their pictures together. This idea of moving picture comedy teams is faulty anyway. For one thing, the necessity of keeping the two parts equal ruins the picture. If the story gives all the laughs to one character, it has to be butchered to make the honors equal. Then there are few types of stories to suit a team, and there is danger of too much repetition. Apparently Eddy Sutherland, who directed Firemen Save My Child! doesn't care how much he repeats, because most of his situations in his latest are the same as they were in Be-hind the Front and We're In the Navy Now.

"Silly drivel" characterizes Firemen Save My Child! more than anything else. A good deal of the antics of

GOULD'S

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Beery and Hatton were received in absolute silence by the audience. That wasn't the fault of the two actors, as they are two of the best in the business. It is too bad that their boxoffice value has to be ruined by stupid production. George Marion's titles were right at home in this picture, although they were a great deal funnier than the rest of the film. Marion is becoming well known for his titles as there was a hum of anticipation when his name was flashed on the screen.

HOEVER conceived Hula certainly had a weird idea of human nature. The characters in Hula didn't act like real people. Most of them acted like maniacs and the rest like nothing at all. The story was silly and impossible, like the characters. The plot, that of two women fighting over a married man, was particularly edifying. The rest of the picture was quite in keeping with the main theme, about as vulgar as it could be.

The picture was nothing but Clara Bow jumping about and posing promiscuously around. She is much too fine an actress to be put in such trash. This "mad-cap daughter" stuff on the screen gives me a pain in the neck, anyway. Any girl who can get a slightly insane look on her face and sit on a horse and look devilish at the same time can do it, and it is far below Clara Bow's talents. The rest of the cast was good, but it was all thrown away on such a silly story. George Marion's silly titles came "oft in the silly night".

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VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

By DARRYL ZANÚCK

The following paragraphs are from a letter by Darryl Zanuck which is treated editorially in another place in this issue:

Mr. Curtiz, as you state, is a very excellent director; and I heartily agree and am in accord with the applause you have given him for this particular piece of work. But to say that none but Mr. Curtiz alone had anything to do with the production is wrong. Under my screen name of Melville Crosman, I wrote the story; and used this nom de plume only to disguise credit, and give director and adaptor and those who actually did the greatest share of work, the full honor for the picture.

However, eliminating the fact that I am the author of the story and that I worked tooth and nail with Mr. Curtiz and the adaptor, throughout the production, I want to speak in behalf of the Warner Brothers system of supervision, which is not supervision, but which is purely and simply co-operation. In the making of The Devil's Paradise, we did not allow time or money or effort to stop us. You will note the production is set in an accurate header country for which are district. ate background, for which credit must be given to the technical department, the photographers, the art directors, and the costumers. In its final editing, the production was handled by our studio editors, who cut and titled the production in a quite efficient manner. Every sequence and every episode in the production was discussed in my office; and some of the trick effects of photography were done by our technical department, co-operating with Mr. Curtiz.

Making a picture is by no means a one man proposition. Sympathetic understanding and sincere co-operation resulted in The Devil's Paradise. Mr. Curtiz injected his individuality and personality into the handling of the artists and dramatic effects of the production, and for this he has achieved an excellent masterpiece, and he alone deserves the credit—but in order for him to succeed, he must have that same co-operation, encouragement, and material, both story and fact, that all Warner productions receive from the "stubborn and ignorant supervisors", as you brand them.

(I can not recall having branded supervisors as "stubborn and ignorant". However, it's all right. Most of them are. W. B.)

ANOTHER SOLUTION

My dear Mr. Beaton:

Since everyone is now expounding their theories on cutting down production cost, I thought that I would take a "hack" at it and give you the ideas of one who has been for nine years one of the "poor working stiffs" in the picture business.

First, I would prohibit any releasing company from making their own pictures. The making of a picture and

the releasing of it are two separate businesses requiring a different type of man to accomplish each one. The present big fellows would let out contracts to individuals specializing on production alone to make their pictures for them. They would turn their present plants into leasing studios and allow their producers to shop where they will for their space and interiors.

I know these sound like broad statements, but let me show you a few of the good resuults obtaining from this

system.

Each picture would be treated as a present day "quickie" is handled now. It would be made "on the desk" before starting. By this I mean that everything would be planned out before-hand and the script adhered to. There would be no devastating "overhead" in the form of useless figureheads posing as executives. The rental studios being on a competitive basis would bring set construction down to a new low point. There would be less miscasting of pictures because only one or two featured players would be tied up by each unit. The "stock player" would not be used in place of the actor fitted for the part just to keep him working. It has been my personal observation that a great deal of time and money has been wasted by actors and directors drinking while on the job (especially "on location"). These selfish weaklings who put physical grati-fication ahead of giving their best efforts to earn the very generous sal-aries paid them would eliminate themselves by sheer necessity. In other words their indiscretions would not be absorbed by pictures made by hard working men who realize that this is a business and that they have no more right to spend their employer's time in carousing than they would have in any legitimate business, as is now the case in mass production. In short, every-thing could and would be treated in a more closely watched and business-like

Under this system, too, the story would become more and more the predominant thing and the "stars" and

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"names" less important, for the releasing companies, having no production worries, would become more critical of the story to be produced and demand better stuff before putting their "Okeh" on it. This naturally would tend to cut down the importance of these publicity made "names" and allow more money to be spent on good stories. The finest minds in the world would be attracted to the writing of screen stories and the excellence of their specialized work would so overshadow that of the higher paid imported auther-celebrity (who has invariably in the past been such a "bust") that this evil would be overgome

Just an instance to show what a clear minded actor imported from. Europe really thinks of our picture business. He said, "What a marvelous joke this game is! Imagine my being worth \$2000.00 per week to anyone! I hope they never get 'wise' to me!" And isn't it a joke to pay a man that much when you stop to consider that acting is his business and he merely played well a wonderful part which a studio gave him, and they did the rest with their exploitation of that fact and picture? I could name dozens of these instances, as you no doubt could also. It is to me the greatest evil of the present system and can only be overcome by playing up the importance of the story and spending the advertising money on the story rather than on the players.

I've a lot more thoughts on these subjects, but do not wish to bore you any more than I already have. I had to get them off my chest to someone and I hope you won't feel like the young lady who was the object of the unwanted affections of a certain young man who said, "Out of a hundred million people, why did you pick on me?"

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STARS		STARS		
P	er cent.		Per cent.	
CHAS. CHAPLIN	100	NORMA TALMADGE	87	
DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS	100	Greta Garbo	86	
HAROLD LLOYD	100	Lillian Gish	86	
Rudolph Valentino	96	Clara Bow	85	
John Barrymore	93	Colleen Moore		
Lon Chaney	92	Mary Pickford	81	
John Gilbert		Marion Davies	80	
Ronald Colman	85	Vilma Banky	80	
Wallace Beery	82	Bebe Daniels		
Richard Dix		Norma Shearer	79	

WRITERS

Per c	e nt.
FRED DE GRESAC	100
Bess Meredyth	92
Laurence Stallings	91
Frances Marion	88
John McDermott	87
Lenore Coffee	86
Dorothy Farnum	86
Elliott Clawson	85
Hans Kraly	84
Ben Glazer	

	SUPERVISURS		
ent.		Per ce	nt.
96	IRVING THALBERG		85
85			
84	Eric Pommer		77
	96 95 92 91 90 88 86 85	96 IRVING THALBERG 95 John Considine Jr. 92 Sam Goldwyn 91 Winnie Sheehan 90 Ben Schulberg 88 Lloyd Sheldon 86 Ralph Block 85 Jack Warner 84 Julian Johnston	ent. Per ce 96 IRVING THALBERG 95 John Considine Jr. 92 Sam Goldwyn 91 Winnie Sheehan 90 Ben Schulberg 88 Lloyd Sheldon 86 Ralph Block 85 Jack Warner

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Edited by WELFORD BEATON

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Published In Hollywood Every Other Saturday

Vol. 4

Hollywood, California, October 15, 1927

No. 4

Mary Pickford scores in latest

Eastern bankers pick best run lot

Producers do not give employees a squaré deal

How Fox treats his newest star, Janet Gaynor

- 0 -

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He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., OCTOBER 15, 1927

"My Best Girl" a Great Picture

ROMANCE that will take its place among the most beautiful that have been presented on the screen, a superbly acted production and one of the best directed of the year-My Best Girl, Mary Pickford's latest picture. For the first time we have Mary in a straight love story, and unless her untold millions of admirers throughout the world hail this picture as her greatest, I will be much surprised. Personally, I am of the opinion that Sparrows is the finest thing she has given us, but it is not the kind of picture her friends would expect from her. My Best Girl is a Pickford picture, and in it she gives a magnificent performance. In one sequence she rises to heights I never saw her attain before. Her pathetic attempt to disillusion the young man she loves, and who loves her, is among the finest things that the screen has given us. It is done superbly, the heart-breaking smile that shines through her tears being a poignant bit of acting that only a great artist could make convincing. One of the most exquisite moments in screen history is her final confession that her pretense can not conquer her love, a moment when her shoulders droop, when the false smile vanishes and she throws herself into her sweetheart's arms. It is a scene that will cause a display of handkerchiefs in every audience that views it. Still My Best Girl will provoke more laughter than anything that Mary has done before. It is full of delicious comedy, subtle touches that preview audiences caught at once. There is none of the senseless "playing down to the audience." Sam Taylor's direction is based on the assumption that the audience is intelligent, and as a consequence this picture is going to gain him recognition as one of the most intelligent directors we have. He has filled it with little directorial gems that make it one of the best directed pictures I ever saw. The opening sequence showing the interior of a large five-and-ten-cent store is particularly effective. First we have a close-up of a cash register clicking out its nickel and dime receipts; then a dissolve to a counter, and finally the scenes enlarge until we have a long shot of the entire store. Taylor has reversed adroitly the hackneyed program of opening with a long shot and progressing backward to a close-up. He builds instead of tearing down. The store scenes, as well as the street scenes and others which have many people in the background, are handled perfectly. He keeps the screen full of action without distracting the attention of the viewer from the principal characters. The direction is equally flawless throughout. Taylor makes his comedy funny, his romance beautiful and his pathos tender. Mary's performance shows that she was happy in working with her director. And Taylor must have been happy in working with such a star and such a cast. Charles Rogers plays opposite Mary. His work is a revelation. This picture is going to make him. He romps through the part with an engaging joyousness that audiences will find contagious. There is not a suggestion of staginess in one of his scenes. Like Taylor, he is equally at home in comedy and in his serious moments. He is a clean looking youth who makes his character one that all audiences will love. The whole picture is cast admirably. There is not one bit that is not played perfectly. Lucien Littlefield is a delightful old letter carrier. His performance is one of the best of his notable career. Sunshine Hart and Carmelita Geraghty also provide excellent characterizations.

Picture Rich in Human Qualities

UTLINE this story to a producer and see how far you'll get: A poor girl, working in a big store, falls in love with a boy with whom she works and who turns out to be the son of the proprietor. The boy's father tries to buy the girl off when he discovers his son loves her, but is won over by the girl's sweetness. Old stuff? Well,

THE PRODUCER'S SOLILOQUY

Well, . . . she stole the picture-Just walked away with it as if it were her right. The star is peeved. She is not beautiful and she has no pull, And the director and all the rest of us Wonder how th' hell She managed it. Her part was just a foil, A sort of background to reflect The star's multifarious charms . . . And yet . . . somehow . . . The star's light waned . . . Its feeble glow was quite absorbed. What necromancy here? What cursed highbrow arts Can thus abjure all movie rules and capture hearts? And the public—the moronesque public, Which precedent has shown Demands ornate display and youth and sex appeal And comedy relief and all the movie props-Has it gone mad . . . or-Wretched thought-grown wise? This girl now-you'd never think That she could pull This subtle stuff—and cop the show! How can we tell? Hell's bells! Her looks— No more appeal than musty books! And yet . . . somehow . . . The critics (damn them) say That she alone displayed an understanding of her part, That she had charm and verve and heart And . . . SOUL. What bunk! "And soul . . . that called from primal deeps To other deeps . . . the mind."
The mind? . . . If mind should rule . . . Oh, then we are at last undone! No more can we retail the old-time bunk! Damned Thought . . . its stifling tide . . . Help! ... no more ... we're sunk!

I should say so! Been done a thousand times, therefore it is out. But it is the story of My Best Girl-just an old, threadworn yarn that has been made into a picture that is exquisite, and tender, and sweet, and pathetic, and funny. Technically it is a fine example of screen craftsmanship. The story runs along smoothly from the first shots; the comedy and romance are balanced nicely; the characterizations are well drawn and developed logically, and I can not remember that I saw a single narrative title. Obtaining such results with such overworked material proves a contention that I have advanced so often: that all the screen needs are human beings and a suggestion of a story to give them opportunities to act naturally. A picture's greatness comes from its treatment, not from the incidents in its story. My Best Girl is treated as a human document, and Sam Taylor's superb direction makes it one of the most appealing pictures that ever came to the screen. Its freedom from movie habits is one of its most pleasing features. A sample: Mary accompanies Rogers to his palatial home where his parents are shocked to learn that their boy loves a poor shopgirl. At least, I presume that they were shocked. Being well bred people, they register no emotion; they merely greet the girl politely, as they would any guest in their home, and hide from her the fact that the prospect of her becoming their daughterin-law dismays them. And the girl does not act like a clown, which is the approved movie method of carrying off such a situation. She is very nervous, and rather pathetic, but quite human. "If you don't mind," she says deprecatingly, "I think I have a headache." There is not a caricature in the entire picture. Lucien Littlefield is a mail carrier, not a screen actor-a rather old man for the job, and one who feels on his shoulders the weight of his bag even when he slumps in his battered easy chair and tries to overlook the fact that his wife is a silly old thing. The manner in which the picture ignores nonessentials is another of its many excellencies. Mary's sister (Carmelita) is arrested. We do not know why. It doesn't matter. Our only interest is in Mary's pathetic plea that the judge be lenient with her. He is, which is evidence of the pictures disposition to avoid being morose. That romantic sets are not essential to romance is demonstrated when one pretty love scene is staged on the back of a truck, and another exquisite one has as its locale the interior of a packing box. But I do not approve of the final love scene, which is enacted in full view of the crowd in a court-room. It is done well, but I would have preferred to have seen it in a more secluded spot. But My Best Girl is a great picture that will add luster to even such a shining star as the magnificent little woman who is its chief ornament. The world expects great things from Mary Pickford, and it will not be disappointed when the picture is released. I have preached earnestly in favor of perfect scripts, and have been told that they were not possible. The script for My Best Girl was perfect. There was not a sequence shot and not used, not a set built and discarded. Sam Taylor knew just what he was doing when he shot each scene. When he completed his first cutting there were only thirty feet more film in the picture than when it was shipped. That is why it is a perfect picture. It is something that can be done with every production, and something that must be done if we are to have perfect ones. From its story to its shooting My Best Girl is composed of so-called impossibilities and is one of the most entertaining pictures

ever made. No exhibitor who has the interest of his patrons at heart can afford to overlook it.

Screen Art Has a Bright Future

GREAT success scored by Mary Pickford will be stimulating to the industry at this time. Mary is the symbol of all that is good and decent in the motion picture world. For seventeen years the world has turned its spotlight on her, and what the fierce light has revealed at all times has been pleasant. The morale of the industry is at a low level. Pictures are worse than ever before. Producers are ignoring all the ordinary decencies in their treatment of their employees, and motion picture people are down in the dumps. They seem to think that screen art is lost. If their Mary failed them, all would be over. And because Mary has not failed them, everyone will feel better. There is nothing in the present situation, deplorable as it is, that saddens me. I am in a highly optimistic mood. Pictures are in the midst of a revolution, and when they emerge from it screen art will be established on a firm foundation. Changes are going to come rapidly. Within a month after I had said in The Spectator and in the American Mercury that the emancipation of pictures would come through the intervention of Wall Street, Wall Street took over First National; Leibler and Rowland are through. Marcus Loew's death will curtail the connection of Louis B. Mayer with Metro. Nicholas Schenck, who virtually controls Loew's, is not partial to Mayer, who has held his position by virtue of his friendship with Loew. That, however, is merely the wrinkle on the surface. The reason that Mayer, and people like him, will get out of pictures is because there is no place in pictures for them, or, rather, there will not be when pictures are run properly. Repeating something I have said until it is becoming bromidic: Nothing unsound can continue to exist in a business that of itself is inherently sound. The Mayers who waste millions of dollars of their stockholders' money, who know nothing about pictures, whose word is not worth a plugged nickle and whose idea of a brilliant stroke of business is to take advantage of an employee, can not continue to exist in a business as inherently sound as pictures. From Mayer's treatment of King Vidor over the profits from The Big Parade, down to the manner in which Harry Cohn swindles writers out of ideas to put in his Columbia pictures, the whole industry is impregnated with a rottenness that stinks. But when we view a Seventh Heaven and a My Best Girl we get a whiff of something so pure and sweet that we take heart again. No business on earth prospered permanently on any plan other than that honesty is the best policy. Pictures have tried to prosper on a policy of chicanery, trickery, lying, ignorance and incompetence, and those sponsoring such a policy have brought the industry to such a pass that decency must come to it to save its life. First National is the first to reform, and I think that in a year or so we will find that they are making pictures sensibly out at the Burbank studio. This means that the brains of pictures will dominate their making, that the president of the company will appreciate that he is a banker and that the skilled picture people who work under him can not use the knowledge they have unless they are given a free hand. Then we will have good pictures.

Poor Business to Steal from Authors

SING screen weaknesses merely as material to create reader interest in The Spectator never has appealed to me as a policy that would benefit pictures, even if it did increase my receipts from newsstands. I have argued that the screen can not succeed permanently on its present policy of get-the-money-at-any-price, and the same argument goes for The Spectator. I might entertain readers with the full story of how Mayer put over the deal that cost King Vidor many hundreds of thousands of dollars that should have come to him as his share of the profits of The Big Parade, but I do not feel that Mayer is important enough to justify the use of the space that the recital would occupy. It is a closed incident. But the policy back of it still persists. Various directors have contracts entitling them to a share of the profits of their pictures. The big producing companies are allied closely with releasing and theatre-owning organizations. Pictures are disposed of to these latter companies at prices that return but small profit to the producing organizations, thereby greatly reducing the directors' share, but adding to the profits that the producers receive as shareholders in the other companies. This is a sample of the downright dishonesty that permeates the whole industry. The pledged word of any of the major producing organizations is worth nothing, and even a written contract with one of them is something to be viewed with suspicion. The treatment accorded writers is a crime against decency. I will quote a paragraph published in the Bulletin of the Writers' Guild:

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Many young writers, and a few of the older ones, occasionally find themselves in such desperate need of employment that they are willing to accept almost anything that promises sufficient compensation to tide them over a dull period. Some free-lance writers between profitable contracts accept what promises to be a quick job at fair pay rather than remain One producing company in Hollywood has for years taken advantage of the situation and profited by it at the expense of writers. We have known a great many who have accepted such employment and have yet to hear of a single one who has received what was Many have contributed an immense promised. amount of work, which has been appropriated, and have received no compensation whatever. The trick is usually to get a dozen men to write an original story or treatment to a theme with the promise that a fair price will be paid if it is satisfactory. Available material is taken from all and no one is paid. The name of this company will be supplied members confidentially at the office of the Guild.

Partly because I never have fancied a policy of beating about the bush, but chiefly to be of service to those writers whose non-affiliation with the Guild gives them no whispering relations with it, I hasten to make the information complete by revealing that the name of the offending company is Columbia Pictures. The Guild should establish a fund to relieve starving writers of the necessity of doing business with Harry Cohn, whose dealings with them are not actuated by one motive that is honest or honorable. He pays money for ideas only when each of his despicable tricks fails. If Cohn protests his innocence with sufficient vigor I might be persuaded to go into

details. The Cohn method, more or less glossed, prevails in other studios. It is considered good business to steal from a writer. But it is not good business. When Banker Hawley gets a thorough grasp of the First National situation that company will be run as ethically as the bank from which he was borrowed. The fact that Hawley is honest personally does not enter into it. He knows that honesty is the only sane business policy. It is the policy that will be applied to all the producing organizations when the present heads are superseded.

Hays Organization Winks at Transgressions

ANY reports come to me. One of them is to the effect that some of the producers feel that I have libeled them, but as they have looked me up and found that I was judgment-proof there was no use suing me for libel. Let us take this seriously, and analyze it. When a man sues for libel and is given a verdict he is vindicated of the charge in the libelous article. His failure to collect the damages allowed him in no way alters the fact of his vindication. If he consider his honor above riches he will press his suit with no thought for the probability of collecting the damages that accompany his vindication. When any producer bases his refusal to proceed against me on his belief that he can collect no money from me, he confesses that his money is of more value to him than his reputation. If I have libeled anyone he owes it to his reputation to take action against me. If he be halfway decent or honest he would not be stopped by his conviction that he could make no money out of the rehabilitation of his reputation. Enough of this judgment-proof piffle. There are so many other more important things to consider. Since the salary cut farce was enacted the mind of the whole industry has been disturbed to an extent that renders impossible the making of good pictures. On practically every lot conditions are deplorable. With entire disregard of the word they pledged at the famous Biltmore banquet, producers are enforcing what amounts to a reduction in salaries. At the time, I said that the promises of the producers were not made to be kept, and the producers have been prompt in proving me right. With their usual capacity for doing insane things they have made their first onslaught one on the earnings of writers. They have united in restraint of trade to reduce the amounts heretofore paid to those who prepare their stories. They have disregarded their moral obligations to take up options at the advances they call for, and agree to renew contracts only at the old figure or at a reduction. The Hays organization, the cloak of respectability that the industry hangs between itself and the public and behind which it conducts its business as no decent business on earth is conducted, connives at all the trickery of its members and aids and abets them in their efforts to take advantage of their employees. The manner in which the organization has blocked every movement for the adoption of an equitable contract for writers reveals the degree of hypocrisy there is in its pretense of righteousness; and the manner in which it is quibbling over whose duty it is to fulfill the promises made at the Biltmore shows how it has betrayed that clause in its constitution which proclaims that the good of the whole industry is its chief consideration, a clause that Will Hays brays about at the slightest provocation. The fact is that in the Hays organization is centralized in functioning form the lack of business rectitude that characterizes its component parts. In the same Bulletin from which I quote in the previous paragraph, the Writers' Guild warns its members to take the word of no one in the business, to insist upon written agreements before any work is done. Imagine that! Here we have an industry that spends ten million dollars a month in making pictures and it is managed by people who can be relied upon to do the decent thing only when they are forced.

Better Pictures Are on the Way

YOW, all the foregoing would be a matter of small importance if it involved only the producers and their employees. If such were its limitations it would not be a subject for discussion in The Spectator, which is interested only in pictures, and not in the individuals who make them. But the mismanagement of the picture industry affects the wide world. When some ignorant supervisor in Hollywood makes a good story ridiculous an audience in Capetown, Africa, suffers. When an incompetent producer wastes a huge sum of money in the production of a picture he is affecting some of the owners of eleven million shares of motion picture stock which have been sold to the public. The Hays organization has acted as a policeman to see that screen artists behave themselves and live up morally to the expectation of the millions who idolize them. It is composed of people who have equally great obligations to the public, but who make no effort to live up to them. As a result of the demoralization of the brains of the industry, which is directly attributable to its management, we are getting a succession of the worst pictures ever made. We have the writers, directors, and actors who could improve the output, but they are not allowed to function. On the Paramount lot a few weeks ago we had the spectacle of a number of world-famous stars assembling in the center of the studio and saluting their employers by putting their thumbs to their noses. Ben Hecht came to the same studio some months ago under contract to write six stories. He found conditions such that after writing one he insisted upon his lucrative contract being canceled, his love of his art outweighing his love of money. Good pictures can not be made in the turmoil that exists on the lot. Much the same conditions prevail on all the other big lots with the exception of United Artists and Universal. But good pictures of the near future are being born of the poor ones we are getting now. The biggest organizations have more money invested in theatres than they have in production. Take the situation in Los Angeles. Paramount invested heavily in the Million Dollar and Metropolitan in order to have an outlet for its pictures. It found that its own pictures did not have enough merit to protect its investment, and turned the houses over to West Coast which places in them any pictures it can get. Paramount now has to compete even with Poverty Row to get its pictures in the houses it owns. The same condition exists in all the other producing organizations which own theatres. This policy of protecting investments in theatres gives all producers an even chance, with the result that the independent is taking on a new importance. Exhibitors no longer care who makes their pictures. It is quality that they insist upon, and this insistence is bringing to the fore the brains in the industry. No one can study the situation without satisfying himself that the emancipation of pictures is at hand. The pessimistic mood of picture people is not justified by the facts. The greatest optimism should prevail. The days of the incompetent supervisor are numbered. The spectacle of a brilliant writer having to shape his wares to comply with the demands of a supervisor with a brain inferior to his own soon will be a page that is turned in the history of the screen. The writer will assume in the industry the importance that must be his before pictures acquire the perfection that the public is demanding. The only uniformly good pictures we are getting now are those made by such independent producers as Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Harold Lloyd, Charlie Chaplin, and those few others whose organizations are free from the incompetence that has demoralized the big lots to such an extent that it is impossible for them to make meritorious pictures.

Pictures Need a Few Frank Hulls

NE of the sins charged against The Spectator is that it forgets that picture-making is a commercial proposition. Many times I criticize adversely pictures which make a lot of money, and the fact that they make money is advanced as a complete answer to anything I have said against them. "Slam our pictures as much as you like," was the way a man high up in Paramount circles put it to me the other day. "They are making money, and that is what they're made for. If you looked at pictures from the commercial angle you'd change your tune." I look at pictures only from a commercial angle. Anyone who is in pictures for any other reason than to make money is in the wrong business. He can do neither himself nor pictures any good. When I criticize the nightmares in which Paramount is presenting Beery and Hatton to the public I am aware that they make money, which does not influence my opinion that they are commercial follies. This team of capable players is being killed as rapidly as Paramount can kill it. No permanent commercial success ever was built on absolute rot. If Beery and Hatton were presented in comedies that were noted for their cleverness they could enjoy popularity as a team for as long as Weber and Fields lasted. As it is, in another year they will be done. If that is an exhibition by Paramount of sound commercial sense it reasons along a line that I can not follow. Pictures need business men who will foster their commercial possibilities. Every argument that can be advanced for the improvement of pictures is a commercial argument. When pictures are better they will earn more money, no matter how great their earnings are now. They will be better when they are run by men who know nothing about them, real executives who will attend to their executive duties and let picture-makers make pic-They need some Frank Hulls. Frank is an old friend of mine, who now manages the Olympic hotel in Seattle. By profession he is a civil engineer. Building the hotel was a civic undertaking. It was not making much progress when someone had the nutty idea of getting the young engineer to head the money-raising forces. He went at it as thoroughly as he would plan to build a bridge, and he raised the money. It was the first time he ever had tackled such a job. After the hotel was opened the stockholders were not satisfied with the management.

Again someone advanced the nutty idea of letting Frank Hull run it. Frank knew nothing about hotels, but he knew a lot about how an executive should function. He secured to head each department a man who knew how to run it, and he let that man alone. All he asked was that each department should give a good account of itself in dollars and cents. He did not go into the kitchen, taste the soup, and order the chef to put more salt in it. He secured the best chef he could, and ate there himself. Today he is running one of the best conducted hotels in the country, and he couldn't make a bed to save his life. Our producers do not run their companies like Frank runs his hotel. They taste the soup, make the beds, and try to boss every other job on the lot. The greatest menace to pictures is the producers' idea that they know stories. Neither God, education nor experience supplied them with the knowledge, but they profess to have it. And they go farther; they think they know how stories should be treated. They pay experts to do jobs, and then harrass them until they do them poorly. When I criticize them for it they tell me I have no commercial sense.

Fox's Treatment of Janet Gaynor

THIRD visit to Seventh Heaven revealed several new places to cry. Probably my previous visits had made me love little Diane so much that things that did not move me as greatly when the love was forming did so when it had reached full bloom. No other screen character has appealed to me as Janet Gaynor makes Diane appeal. Janet is more than just a girl with talent. Her power is inborn, a divine gift which she brought to the screen, and with which she has been endowed more richly than any other actress I know. Her mechanics are perfect because they are not studied. They are but the physical reactions to her thoughts, therefore are absolutely natural. When Frank Borzage directed his great picture he talked to Janet about each scene until his mind and hers were in tune, then he told her to go on the set and think it. The physical reaction he left to her, and she was unconscious of it. In Sunrise Janet gives another superb performance in an entirely different role, and when it is shown out here I am confident that Hollywood will be convinced that she is our greatest screen actress. Reducing her to dollars and cents, and basing the estimate on what other stars receive, Janet's salary should be several thousand dollars per week, certainly three thousand. The Fox people know this, but they pay her three hundred under a contract that will bring her seven hundred a week when she has been with them six years in all. Grant, for the sake of argument, that she is worth three thousand. That means that Fox is retaining each week twenty-seven hundred dollars that rightfully should go to her. The fact that she signed a contract has nothing to do with either the ethics or the common business sense of it. An employee of any firm should be paid what he is worth to the firm, however much less he might be willing to accept. It is the only decent way to run a business. Fox pays Olive Borden fifteen hundred dollars a week because she will not work for less, and pays Janet Gaynor three hundred because she is a sweet and trusting youngster, easily imposed upon. And Fox imposed upon her. When it began to appear that she was destined to be a great actress, her contract calling for one hundred dollars a week was

torn up with a grand gesture and one calling for two hundred offered her. Janet suggested that she was worth more, and then the browbeating began. Who was she that she should get more money? What had she done to deserve it? The executives who asked the questions—there were several of them in the room with Janet-knew that they were dealing with a young, sensitive and inexperienced girl, and soon they had her reduced to tears. But Winnie Sheehan came to her rescue, big, great-hearted Winnie. He persuaded her to sign a contract for five years, three hundred dollars per week for the first year and a one hundred dollar increase each succeeding year. If the Fox people had not known she was worth many times what they were paying her they would not have bothered with her at all. If they did not know what a superb artist she was they have no business to be in an industry that demands an ability to judge artists. They simply forced an inexperienced girl to give them something worth thousands in return for a few hundreds. In previous paragraphs I refer to the manner in which producers conduct their business. Out of many instances which I might relate to illustrate my remarks I have selected this one. Merely change the names and you can multiply it by hundreds. The motion picture industry as a whole does the decent thing only under compulsion.

Give Us a Chance to Make a Fortune

NE never can tell when he is going to lose a lot of money, even if he did not have it to lose. The other day two charming gentlemen visited me. They had personalities, vibrant, spontaneous personalities, and clothes in harmony with them. Only a couple of weeks previously they had "blown in from little old Broadway to give the film burg the once-over," they told me, and then they went on: They were salesmen who knew how to sell false teeth to people with real ones. They would make me a lot of money. Film people are easy marks. They will buy space in a special number of anything. After canvassing the field in both New York and Hollywood my visitors had arrived at the conclusion that the greatest clean-up in history could be made with a Christmas number of The Spectator. It is the one paper, they said, which had the respect of the entire industry. There was not a person in pictures who would not jump at the chance of buying space in it in the belief that he was doing something that would influence the editor's treatment of him. Of course, my visitors protested, they knew I could not be influenced by the sale of advertising space, but those who bought it would think that I would, and that, after all, was what mattered. Now, the plan was this: I would give the New Yorkers letters of introduction to all the principal picture people in Hollywood, telling them how pleased I would be to see them represented in my Christmas number. My new and cordial friends would go out with the letters, take all the time they needed. and knock 'em dead! For such salesmen, backed by the standing of The Spectator, it would be a pipe to dispose of two hundred full pages at two hundred dollars per page. This would be forty thousand dollars which we would split fifty-fifty. Out of my fifty I would pay the expense of the edition; out of theirs they would pay the selling expense. Wasn't it a darb? I said it sure was. Didn't I think they could put it over? You bet your life I did, al-

though I could not resist telling one of them that I thought he could do better with less boisterous neckware. From then on the party wasn't so successful. The atmosphere became chilly, and the personalities lost their luster. Apparently I went insane suddenly. Anyway, I lost the twenty thousand. I told my visitors that a full page advertisement in an edition devoted to graft never did the advertiser any good, and that The Spectator refused to accept money without giving some return; that I knew that the advertisers would buy space in the belief that it would affect my editorial utterances and that to accept their money would be receiving it under false pretense. My visitors left before I really hit my stride, and I made the rest of my speech to my two dogs. It was the first suggestion that the Christmas clean-up season for grafting publications was in the offing. Picture people need make no allowance for The Spectator when they make up their blackmail budgets. I never will get out a special number. I am of the opinion that the most valuable advertising an artist, writer or director can do is in a card which runs permanently in The Spectator, but the purchase of this space is purely a commercial transaction with which the editorial policy is in no way involved. I need to sell more advertising to make the paper pay, but I will not adopt the periodical clean-up policy practiced by other screen publications and patronized by people who lack the sense to realize that it is a total waste of money. Hollywood people will spend many thousands of dollars in Christmas numbers in a few months. The papers that accept the money merely are levying blackmail on the motion picture industry, and those who pay it are fools.

"The Fourflusher" Nice Little Thing

TESLEY RUGGLES is particularly effective with a picture which features young people. In making The Fourflusher he had George Lewis and Marian Nixon to direct in the leading parts, as well as a group of the youngsters who supported Lewis in The Collegians, among whom Eddie Phillips, quite a capable youthful heavy, and Churchill Ross, a really clever comedian, are prominent. Lewis, still not far from his teens, is coming on. He is a fine looking boy, but his work heretofore has been marred by a tendency to act. In The Fourflusher he corrects that fault, is natural and consequently gives a mighty fine performance. A little more direction as intelligent as that of Ruggles will advance Lewis into the rank of our most pleasing young leading men. I suppose taste in screen girls is like taste in socks: purely a personal matter. I have had a yen for Marian Nixon since I first saw her on the screen. There is something about her that attracts me even in scenes in which she has practically nothing to do, and when she gets really busy before the camera I enthuse. She and Lewis are an attractive looking and clever team that should be seen in a series of such pictures as The Fourflusher, clean productions dealing with the doings of young people. Ruggles has given his picture a delightful atmosphere. There is nothing in it to get excited about, and it did not cost a great deal to make, but it is jolly and healthy entertainment from the opening shot to the final fadeout. It is an ingratiating picture in that it is full of faults that in one that pleased me less I would criticize severely. I do not refrain because I wish to be lenient, but because the picture pleased me, because it made me its friend, and we overlook in our friends faults that would irritate us when we encounter them in others. The bankers who view The Fourflusher will be appalled by the loose banking methods that prevail in it. Wilfred North, a sterling character actor who should be seen more frequently, is president of a bank. He lends Lewis ten thousand dollars without security on the word of Burr McIntosh that the loan will be covered next day. I wish I could find a banker who could be separated from money as easily. My banker wouldn't take my word that this is Southern California. Despite the fact that Lewis is doing a prosperous business when the note falls due, the bank president heads a delegation of creditors who visit his store to close it secause George can't pay the note. Anyone with any knowledge of banking knows that under the circumstances the bank would have been glad to renew the note, and also that a bank president would not leave his bank to talk to God. Such are some of the mistakes you will excuse in The Fourflusher because they don't irritate you. In fact, they make the picture more entertaining, for the principal characters are young people who know nothing about business and it seems consistent to have bankers who apparently know nothing about banking. But the chief appeal of the picture is its healthy atmosphere. You can take a bunch of good looking young people, dress them acceptably, and make them act naturally, and you have a picture that is worth viewing even if there isn't much of a story.

"Woman on Trial" Lacks High Spots

TX7HEN a screen narrative is of itself absorbing all we ask the characters enacting it to do is to act naturally and to indulge in no histrionics. But when we have a dramatic actress like Pola Negri in a narrative that is unconvincing we expect her to do some trouping to make us forget the story's lack of entertainment. In A Woman on Trial we have Pola suppressed until she becomes monotonous, and the story is based on the entirely unreasonable conduct of the character who motivates it. Mauritz Stiller, unquestionably one of the best directors we have, gives a Germanic treatment to a French play, consequently his characters accentuate the unreality of the production. The French husband, played by Ormonde Hayward, behaves exactly as we would expect a German to behave, and unlike anything that we might expect from a Frenchman. And Pola's characterization does not conform to the popular conception of what a French woman would do under similar circumstances. At any rate, it is not the kind of performance we have a right to expect from her. We are carrying this suppression stuff too far. All the life is suppressed out of A Woman on Trial. The people in it behave, perhaps, exactly as people of that sort would in real life. I have argued many times that we want more ordinary human beings on the screen. I will qualify that by saying that we want them to be ordinarily human when they are doing ordinary human things. And we don't want people who can't act to try to act. But when an emotional actress like Pola Negri murders a man, we want her to emote more or less violently, for we know she can do it and there is an excuse for it, for murder is not an ordinary human thing. In many ways this picture is done superbly,

but it lacks high spots. It is an unpretty thing played on one string. To start with, the story of a woman killing a man is sordid. Then its entire action is based on the entirely unreasonable conduct of one of its main characters. The husband's jealousy is ridiculous because there is not a single incident in the conduct of the wife that justifies it. No picture can be convincing when the reasonable conduct of one character is based on the unreasonable conduct of another. I can imagine a husband wanting to choke a wife who is as placid and drab as Pola is in this picture, but I can not imagine one becoming insanely jealous of her, and if you ask me to accept the jealousy as a fact and become interested in what is built upon it, I yawn. Hayward follows Pola to a sanatarium where her former sweetheart lay apparently dying. It is a simple act of human charity and kindness, and there is nothing in it to give offense to any husband. But the husband throws Pola out of his home on account of it, and denies her the right to see her child. It is purely a manufactured situation. A husband in this story's environment would not create the scandal that must follow such action. A woman who would stand for it is a fool, and you can not make an audience sympathize with the suffering of a fool. The child is awarded to the mother by the process of law, and the father regains it without the process of law. He collects his own evidence and acts upon it himself without presenting it in court. Quite placidly Pola shoots the man who framed the evidence against her. He committed no act that might justify the shooting under the unwritten law. It was a straight case of murder for which there was not the slightest excuse, but the jury of Iowa farmers acquitted Pola because it was so written in the script. The tempo of the production is so slow that it becomes dreary. Arnold Kent is the only really human being in it. I like him better every time I see him. The picture is produced beautifully, and if you condone the treatment you must admit that it is directed wonderfully well. But I do not like the treatment. I would have been willing to pay twice the admission charge to see Pola indulge in some good, old fashioned ranting. Or do anything else that would have shown that she was alive.

"Stolen Bride" Story Is Weak

AN a picture become popular when its story is based on a father forcing his daughter into an unwelcome marriage? I doubt it. It is too un-American. I can not see that it makes any difference if the locale of the picture is in a country in which such things are done. It is not done in this country, because our daughters would not stand for it, and it is difficult to get our daughters interested in those of any other country who would submit to such unreasonable conduct. In The Stolen Bride, paternal despotism is not carried to the altar, because the bride runs away, and not because she tells her silly dad to go jump in the bay, as I hope either of my daughters would if I ordered her to marry some goof that I picked. If my line of reasoning be wrong, then I am at a loss to explain why this First National picture starring the gorgeously beautiful Billie Dove, is not a more entertaining film. Alexander Korda has directed it splendidly, it has a sumptuous and artistic production, the members of the cast give good performances, Dwinelle Benthal and Rufus McCosh contribute an excellent set of titles, and

yet it is a dull picture. Even the glorious shots of Billie do not raise it above the average. But it is not a picture of which First National need be ashamed, which is more than can be said of the majority of those being made in Burbank. I believe this is the first of Korda's pictures that I have seen. I know nothing of him, but his name has a foreign appearance. He has supplied several shots similar to those that characterize the work of the foreign directors, and all of them are effective. When Billie Dove and Lloyd Hughes are prisoners in her bedroom, Korda shows the shadowy legs of the sentry passing back and forward over the scenes in which they appear. It is a bit of fine direction. In a couple of scenes outside the door he shows the shadow of the pacing sentry on the wall. That is a directorial touch with which I do not agree. I do not see that it is permissible to use a shadow when there is no excuse for not showing the substance. It merely is trick stuff that attracts attention to itself as a trick and detracts from the sincerity of the scene. Korda has the foreign facility for handling extras. His scenes of railway stations and cafes are particularly well staged. He composes his scenes with high regard for their artistic possibilities, and lights them beautifully. His cameraman deserves a lot of credit. I would like to see what Korda could do with a really strong story. I believe he could give us something worth while. Billie Dove's performance is as good as it had to be. No fault could be found with it. Armand Kaliz at last was given a part with which he could do something. I have watched him in small bits and satisfied myself that he knows how to act. As the heavy in The Stolen Bride he gives a really excellent performance, one that should make him fall heir to other



important assignments. Cleve Moore, interesting because he is Colleen's brother, has a pleasing screen personality and I see no reason why he should not develop into an acceptable leading man. Lloyd Hughes is quite an agreeable hero. He has such a cheerful smile that he should be allowed to use it more often. Lilyan Tashman contributes largely to the acceptable acting that enriches the picture. But the story is not a strong one. I could develop no sympathy for the hero and heroine when they were in dire distress. I could not forget that it was a movie and that in the end everything would be lovely. But I'll confess that I was interested when Billie and Lloyd were in danger in the room. I could not forsee the end of that sequence. But I did not care a great deal.

Heavy Walks Off With the Picture

TIS performance in The Dog of the Regiment, a Rin-Tin-Tin picture soon to be released by Warner Brothers, should put John Peters on the map as a Central European heavy. Although not a German, he is a perfect type for a German, and in appearance is startlingly like Von Stroheim. But he is a better actor than Von, if we may judge from this one performance, for his work is free from the self-consciousness that characterizes Von's. Peters is particularly effective with the mannerisms that we associate with Germans of the type he characterizes, and makes a smart German officer in the war sequences. His villainy is depicted with sincerity and smoothness, and is free from the over-acting that so many heavies indulge in. His performance is the chief feature of an interesting picture, one not free from faults, but nevertheless quite entertaining. Tom Gallery is the hero, and his selection is another example of proper casting. He looks like an American soldier, and acts his part capably. Dorothy Gulliver is the girl and she displays all the ability that the part calls for. Ross Lederman directed the picture, and I can find no fault with his work. It is a long time since I saw Rin-Tin-Tin. Apparently he is getting old, as he seemed to be bored greatly. He puts little punch into most of his scenes, and acts as if his mind were engaged elsewhere. The picture has many technical perfections, with a few faults to offset them, but as I saw the production in preview I presume some of them will be corrected. To counteract the unfavorable impression the picture might have on Germans on account of the prominence in it of a German officer as a pronounced heavy, we are given a German general who is distinctly human. Peters apparently forges the general's name to an order for Tom Gallery's execution, but it is not planted sufficiently clearly to make an audience sure whether it was a forgery. In a scene with considerable drama in it, Gallery is ordered to shoot the dog, which is tied to a post. Tom fires and the dog escapes. Again it is not clear what happened. The rope holding the dog breaks. It would have been good business to have had Tom deliberately shoot at the rope, which may have been what happened, but apparently he shot at the dog and missed. Such faults as these undoubtedly are due to faulty editing and not to the direction. When Miss Gulliver is shown as a nurse at the front she is dressed with a neatness which gives the impression that the war was a pink tea affair. She looks like the kind of Red Cross nurse that one might find on the front cover of a magazine, and totally unlike one who was making herself useful in the war zone. Before the war starts Gallery, an American attorney, is in Germany and receives a cable from his firm. It is signed, "Brown, Smith and Jones, attorneys." If Darryl Zanuck, who supervised the picture, will permit me I would like to point out to him that he should have consulted someone who knows something about cablegrams. Signatures have to be paid for at so much a word. No sane business or professional firm-which eliminates motion picture producers-would have five words in a signature to a cable message sent to one of its associates. Of course this picture has one fundamental fault that outweighs all others, but it is so characteristic of dog pictures that I merely took it for granted and passed it without comment. It makes the dog do a lot of things that are unconvincing because no dog in real life would do them. Some day some producer is going to give us dog pictures which show dogs acting like dogs and not like movie actors. He will make a lot of money. But The Dog of the Regiment is an interesting picture notwithstanding, for which one may thank John Peters for his fine performance and Ross Lederman for his good direction. I understand that it is Lederman's first picture. I suppose he was harrassed, as all new directors are, by people with minds inferior to his, but he got away with his job all right anyway.

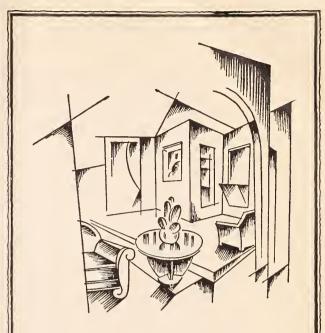
About the Trout at Noah Beery's Club

DIRECTOR'S chair under a tree which has slender limbs and small leaves which tremble and sprinkle me with quivering spots of sunshine; a chair beside a mountain stream which yawns into a pool that acts as a mirror for the trembling leaves and the blue California sky that appears between them. I am sitting in the chair as I write, and I look across my pad every now and then to watch the trout that live in the pool. They have no privacy, for the water comes from mountain springs and is clear and cold. I feel that if I were a trout I would like to live in this particular pool and have as a roof the pictures which it composes with mountains and trees and sky. Across the pool is another director's chair in which Donald sits, his convalescence having progressed far enough to permit the trip, but not far enough to eliminate the crutches which lie beside the chair. He pulls his seventeenth trout from the pool as I light my pipe, and he tells me that he is having better luck with a brown hackle than he had at first with a grey one. He swings his latest around to his mother who for the seventeenth time declares that after this one he'll have to take his own fish off his hook. He grins at me, and casts again, his fly lighting lightly and wrinkling the mirror which the pool uses as a top. It is silent where we sit, a silence that is accentuated by the songs which streams sing softly as they enter and leave the pools that are formed when they pause to stretch. Down below us somewhere is a noisy world where the air is full of the smell of gasoline and the sound of auto horns, but we have forgotten it. Only four hours ago we were in the middle of it—and Donald has caught seventeen trout. We're up at Noah Beery's Paradise Trout Club. I never dreamed that such a place existed in California. It is a mile above Hollywood, and this is the dryest time of the year, but this afternoon I walked over a meadow that underground springs make muddy, and Ronald Colman, Bill Powell and I tried our luck in half a dozen streams

and twice as many pools, and to-night we're going to eat so many trout that we'll be stupid, and go to bed early. I don't know anything about Noah's club, whether you can join, or how much it costs if you can, but I already have seen enough of it to convince me that Noah is doing something for Hollywood that is of inestimable value to it. He is giving picture people a place of rest that is but two and a half hours from their studios, and whose charms are so manifold that I can not arrange words to do them justice. It must have cost Noah a lot of money to do what he has done already, and it will take a tremendous sum to carry out all the plans that he and Phil de Merce, his partner, have outlined. Obviously it is a labor of love, for they could invest the money where it would yield a greater return and take less watching. I am prompted solely by selfish motives in telling you about it. I want you to join the club-I suppose you can-in order that the plans can go through. Then I won't have to go to the State of Washington for my fishing. Next summer you'll be able to play tennis and golf, swim and ride horses, and always near at hand are pools in which are shy trout that take a lot of fooling, and turbulent streams where you can cast if you prefer to fish for trout that you can not see. The Spectator is not going into the booster business, but, even so, I can not refrain from recommending without reservation the Noah Beery Paradise Trout Club as one that every lover of the outdoors should join. Noah will be surprised.

"Flying Nut" Is Quite Nutty

NIVERSAL, under Henry Hennigson's management, is turning out pictures that average higher in entertainment value than those of any other studio, but it does not maintain its pace with The Flying Nut. From the story and continuity written by Harry O. Hoyt it could have made a clever comedy, but it has made a farce out of it and robbed it of most of its cleverness and all of its plausibility. In Glen Tryon Universal has a gifted young comedian and it should present him in straight comedies, not in farces. Reg. Denny is quite sufficient as a farceur, and I do not see why Hennigson gives Tryon the same line of work. The Flying Nut is not supposed to be taken seriously, but that is no reason why it should be made improbable. Tryon is characterized as an absolute idiot in a part that he could have made genuinely funny. Paramount is doing the same thing with Beery and Hatton, and First National with George Sidney and Charlie Murray. When a scene is based on an utter impossibility, it loses the germ of its humor. In The Flying Nut, Tryon, Patsy Ruth Miller and Burr McIntosh have a flight in a comedy airplane which by no possibility could fly to Europe. It is photographed cleverly and the studio shots are matched effectively with long shots of the plane in the air, but the whole sequence loses most of the humor of the conception because the audience knows that the flight could not happen. If an ordinary plane had been used, one that might get as far as Europe, the flight would have had a much greater comedy value. In another sequence Tryon rushes into Patsy Ruth's bedroom and closes behind him a door which is only two or three feet behind Pat who is sitting with her back to him. She does not hear him enter. I have referred to this directorial stupidity before. Ordinarily I pay no attention to the audience reaction to a



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picture I am viewing, although everyone tells me I should, but when this bedroom sequence got off to what I considered a false start I noted how the large audience received it. The subsequent action was designed to get laughs, and it got some, but I noted that although there was a lot of comedy in the situation the laughs were scattered, not being anywhere as nearly general as those which greeted more plausible sequences. I satisfied myself that the audience knew that Tryon could not have entered the room without Pat hearing him, and that as a consequence it refused to be interested in what followed. The obsession for absolute rot was carried to a harmful extent in a banquet scene. By an amusing accident Tryon finds himself called upon to make a speech. The situation presented a rare opportunity for a really witty speech, but instead of titles with some humor in them, we are given a lot of rot that only some insane person would utter. But the intelligentlooking diners applaud it. It would have been consistent to have shown the diners amazed at the insane utterances, but by no possibility could one conceive of them taking the speech seriously and applauding it. It is one of the several sequences in the picture that lacks sincerity. As a vehicle for demonstrating that Tryon has comedy possibilities The Flying Nut is a success. Also, we can thank it for presenting Patsy Ruth Miller in an agreeable part. She stands well upon my list of favorites. McIntosh scores again in a comedy role and Brand Whitlock gives another of his sincere characterizations as a heavy. But I hope that Universal will not overlook any more such opportunities as this picture gave it. A good farce can not be made out of a good comedy script, not even with the intelligent direction that William Craft gives The Flying Nut.

Might Make Westerns Somewhat Intelligent

LTHOUGH I do my best to make myself clear when I put a thought in writing I don't seem to succeed at all times. In a recent Spectator I stated that the pictures that had the most universal appeal were Westerns, and that they could be made popular in first run houses all over the world. A few days ago I had lunch in a studio cafe with a number of really intelligent picture people. All of them had read my remarks about the Westerns, and with great unanimity they jumped on me. They said that big houses had tried out Westerns and could not interest their patron's in them. They cited instances of New York turning down good Westerns. The kind of Westerns that I was referring to are good ones, not the terrible kind that we are getting now. The vast majority of people love the out-doors, fine riding, shooting from the hip, and he-men and she-women. I don't believe I ever heard anyone say that he did not like Westerns. I have heard any number say that they did not like the kind we are getting. I am confident that some producer could make a clean-up with a series of Westerns patterned after those we see now, but with sensible stories that would not offend one's intelligence. I viewed a Tom Mix picture the other night. It was about some Red River gang. It was produced on a lavish scale in respect to scenery, and had a pretty good cast, but it was one of the most asinine things I ever saw. Undoubtedly it was made on the theory that anything will go in a Western. To start with, it was the usual stock model, with its gang of outlaws and the hero who outwits them. That would not be so

JAMES A. CREELMAN WRITER

Is now under contract to this office



Demmy Lamson, Mgr. Ruth Collier, Associate

bad if the model were burnished up to look like new, which this time it wasn't. It was a ridiculous story. Because Tom loved a girl when he was ten years old and she was younger, he loved her when they first met as adults. If I loved to-day all the women I loved as girls when I was around ten years of age I would have to use a card index to keep me out of jams. Tom's old romance should have been developed over again. The shooting in this picture is wildly ridiculous. Tom's revolver picked off bandits a mile away, but their rifle bullets failed to find a target. And all the revolvers seemed to be pocket machine guns, for they kept on peppering away despite the fact that in the entire picture there was not one scene showing anyone loading his gun. As usual in all such pictures that I have seen, the horse seemed to be endowed with a power a bloodhound would envy. Tony tracks Tom through the desert in a way that neither man nor brute could in real life. The sheriff has no idea where the bandits hang out. They live in a place almost as big as the Biltmore Hotel, and with uncanny wisdom Tom discovers it. There was not an ounce of brains in the whole production, yet a corking good picture could have been made of it by stripping all the absurdities from the story, building up some plausible drama, developing a pretty romance, and injecting some spectacular shooting and riding. Scenically it is good enough as it is. It would carry to intelligent picture patrons all over the world some of our startling Western scenery, but to satisfy the same people it would have to have some sense in it. The good Westerns that failed to draw in the big houses were paying the penalty for all the poor ones that preceded them. It would take a year or two to restore the public's confidence in such screen entertainment, but the producer who restored it would become prosperous.

"Girl From Chicago" Good Entertainment

THE Girl From Chicago, a new Warner Brothers picture, is satisfactory screen entertainment. Ray Enright directed and has very little to apologize for. There were several senseless close-ups, and in many scenes the characters were grouped unnaturally in an effort to have all of them facing the camera. The latter is a directorial fault that I can not understand at all. The most inexperienced director should be aware of the fact that when three or four people are conversing they do not stand in a straight line and talk to one another over their shoulders. The Girl From Chicago is a crook drama, for which Graham Baker wrote an excellent script. The featured players are Myrna Loy and Conrad Nagel. Myrna's unusual type of beauty never appeared to better advantage than it does in this production. She is pleasing throughout the picture, although she does not quite rise to the occasion when she learns that her brother is to be executed for murder. Such news would stun any girl. Myrna seemed to be but bothered slightly. Conrad Nagel continues his upward stride in this picture. Since he roamed away from the Metro lot he is getting some parts which permit him to show what an excellent actor he is. I think he is one of the best comedians we have, and in this latest film he shows himself to be equally proficient in a melodramatic role. Bill Russell, who, according to Darryl Zanuck, was cast as an English officer in another Warner picture because his parents were English, is cast in this one as a New York

crook in spite of his parentage. I don't see how Zanuck can figure out that the same man is a good type for both a smart British officer and a tough gang leader in this country. But Bill does well. I like crook dramas when they are as well done as The Girl From Chicago. It holds the interest throughout and is full of suspense. The story runs pretty true to form, but it is well told and such faults as it has are not important enough to distract one's attention from the action, and are worth mentioning only for what lessons we can draw from them. An insert of a watch shows us that only thirty-five minutes are to elapse before Carroll Nye is to go to the electric chair. Then follows action that gives the impression of consuming hours. It is an exaggerated straining to produce suspense. It overshoots the mark by creating too much suspense. It makes the audience impatient with the action. Nye enters the death house in Sing Sing while the police in New York are on their way to rescue Conrad from the gang whose confession would clear Nye. The gang has to be taken, the evidence secured, the governor informed in Albany, a stay of execution granted and word of it sent to Sing Sing. All this must be done during the five or ten minutes a condemned man is in the death chamber before the current is turned on. It is ridiculous to ask an audience to take such stuff seriously. It is the conventional wooden way of making pictures, and is unconvincing because the audience knows that it is impossible. Another fault was the overdose of shooting when the police raid the gang. Nagel uses a couple of those extraordinary revolvers that they use in Westerns, the ones that can be fired scores of times without being loaded. Sometime some director is going to create a sensation by showing a

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man firing six shots and then ducking for cover while he reloads his gun. It will be a dirty trick to play on all other directors, but one of them eventually will sink low enough to do it. The titles in The Girl From Chicago were punctuated with all the ignorance that is characteristic of the Warner studio's use of English.

Erich Pommer is going back to Germany. was no place in Hollywood for the greatest brain in pictures. The man who supervised The Last Laugh, Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Waltz Dream, Faust, Metropolis and Variety, all among the great pictures of screen history, could not function here, for the mentality that dominates picture making in Hollywood is not great enough to grasp his possibilities. He was offered any number of contracts, but under any of them he would have been able to turn out only the kind of pictures they were getting without him. In spite of his extraordinary record, no one would give him a free hand. Producers who know nothing about story values, treatment or direction, wanted to dictate to this man, who knows more about them than anyone else. But I imagine Pommer is smiling as he is on his way back to the country which appreciates him. He has learned all there is to learn here, and he will put it in the pictures he is going to make. As a matter of fact, I don't believe that he could have been persuaded to remain, but that does not excuse Hollywood for not making a more strenuous effort to keep him. While he was here Pommer learned much from us, but I doubt if we learned anything from him, for we did not seem to appreciate that he had anything to teach us. Those who worked with him while he was here declare that contact with him was an inspiration. Some of our most capable screen people have told me that they would be willing to follow Pommer to Berlin for the privilege of working with him. Some of them probably will. My guess is that in his activities in Germany Pommer will use both writers and stars from this country. And he will send us over some pictures that will show us how pictures should be made.

Every little while a story comes to light to prove that there is a whole lot of good in the world. For a few months a woman writer was on the pay-roll on the Metro lot. After she left she suffered considerable misfortune and ran out of funds. She was mentioned at a dinner party at which Louis B. Mayer was a guest. He asked some questions about her, apparently only to keep the conversation going, as he did not seem to be much interested. A day or two later the woman received from Mayer a cheerful little letter and a rousing big check. She never had met him. I know this story is true, for the woman who received the check came to me and roasted me good and plenty for criticizing her benefactor. Also she asked me to relate the incident in The Spectator to offset what I have been saying about the hero of it. I do so cheerfully. No criticism of Mayer, or of anyone else, is aimed at him personally. I deal with all of them solely in their picture capacities. I do not believe that Mayer is a competent motion picture executive, but I do believe that if I met with misfortune and was suffering through lack of money he would come to my rescue as soon as he heard of it. I know of one singularly splendid thing along the same line that Jesse Lasky has done, but I can not relate it without abusing a confidence. Since hearing it I have had a warm spot in my heart for Jesse. There are lots of fine people connected with pictures.

Some interesting news comes to me from New York. Two banking groups recently had representatives in Hollywood making a thorough study of the manner in which the studios were run. Both groups were informed that the best conducted studio was Universal. Under Henry Hennigson's management Universal has settled down into a smoothly running organization, and its pictures average higher in entertainment value than those of any other studio. Efficient management always will result in good pictures. Everyone on the Universal lot is one hundred per cent. for Hennigson, a condition that exists on no other Hollywood lot. Universal pays good salaries to people with brains, and the general manager realizes that the only way to get a fair return on the salary investment is to allow the brains to function. He has his own ideas, and makes no bones about advancing them, but he is willing to listen to the other fellow, his fairness in this regard making him extremely popular with all Universal employees. The studio is making good pictures because everyone, from Hennigson down, is devoting all his thinking to making them good. On the other lots the people with brains are thinking about what fine pictures they could make if they were allowed to make them. It is too bad that there is but one Hennigson.

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Bernard Vorhaus, was shown at the Writers' Club, it was projected so poorly that it appeared to bad advantage. But it intrigued me sufficiently to prompt me to ask for another showing. Run at the proper speed in a projection room it made a much better impression. It is a worthy example of screen work and the youthful producers are to be commended for stepping out bravely and giving the screen a much needed uplift. Zasu Pitts gives a splendid performance of an old woman dominated by her older sister, capably played by Ada Beecher. The picture is a simple one, dealing solely with the differences in the characters of the two old women. There is a slight love story, played by Greta Rue and Herbert Moulton, and these four are the only players who appear. The characters are drawn with considerable skill and the whole sketch is presented in a manner that indicates that Miss Burns and Vorhaus may be relied upon to give us a series of tworeel productions that will attain high rank as thoughtful and entertaining productions. It is only by such brave experiments that screen art will be advanced.

Edward Everett Horton's new play, So This Is Love, now playing at the Music Box in Hollywood, is a bright, sparkling comedy, to which lustre is added by the sure touch of the artistry of its star. So This Is Love incidentally marks the return to the stage of Mrs. Reginald Denny, who I have not seen before the footlights since she appeared in a little one-act farce—called, if I remember right, The Garden of Eden—at the Actors' Relief Fund Benefit in October, 1923. So This Is Love naturally gives her talents greater scope, and she plays up to Horton's comedy in a very effective manner. The whole cast is very good, and if you are looking for an evening of light entertainment you will find plenty of laughter at the Music Box.

"Let's go to the Riviera for the week-end," is one of the titles in The Whirlwind of Youth, a Paramount close-up crime. It is spoken in Paris. Ordinarily we interpret week-end as meaning from Friday night until Monday morning. I can't recall just how long it took me to go from Paris to Monte Carlo, but my impression is that if I had left Paris on Friday night I would have arrived at Monte Carlo just about in time to make me hustle back to Paris on the next train to be on hand Monday morning. People in Paris don't go to the Riviera for the week-end. It's too far.

In Pola Negri's latest picture Sidney Bracey has a small part. Every time I see him in one of the bits that are dealt out to him I wonder when someone is going to wake up to the fact that he is a brilliant actor who would be a sensation in a part that would do him justice. I don't know Bracey, but I have watched him in the small chances that are given him and have been impressed by his mastery of the art of acting. He is not the type for a conventional leading part, but I am confident that he could give an amazing performance in the right character role,

While waiting for a preview the other night I saw the last reel of Mr. Wu, a picture I liked very much. But I was surprised to find that the ridiculous final shot—the one showing the two principal characters looking like surpliced cooties crawling into heaven on a beam of light—

was retained when the picture was released. It is the silliest fadeout I can recollect having seen in a picture.

Some time ago I remarked in The Spectator that Carl Laemmle Jr. was the only man in the business old enough to shave who had been born in it. I was wrong. I've located another, Jim Blackton Jr., son of Stuart Blackton, the capable young fellow who is manager of the San Diego studios.

Noah Beery gave an unforgettable performance in Beau Geste, in which he meets a magnificent death. In Beau Sabreur Paramount brings him back to life to enact a big role. It was unwise casting. When his death was registered so graphically in one picture he should not appear in another that will be considered a sequel to the first.

In Mockery, Lon Chaney's starring vehicle reviewed in the last Spectator, there is an interesting departure: the use of a fat man as heavy. Charles Puffy, who is quite rotund, gives a splendid performance as a villain who influences the mind of the simple peasant, played by Chaney.

"Paramount developed her shrewdly," boasts an advertisement about Clara Bow. A few more pictures like Hula, even though it is making a lot of money, and the undeveloping process will be well under way.

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Now the motion picture as we know it in the States today is not Art. With the exception of such sporadic beautiful blossoms, and perfect, as Seventh Heaven, The Way of All Flesh, The Last Laugh, The White Sister, The Covered Wagon, Silence, The Volga Boatman, and a few others which were born to blush unseen by the writer, many of the productions are more or less dross, in spite of the paradoxical fact that the business men who produce them are sifting enormous quantities of gold from their "silver veins".

For they are the popular priced, ready-made "Cloak and Suit" products of the Motion Picture Industry. And, just as we feel more bloodthirstily disposed toward the original creator and perpetrator of some Joseph colored garment (a so-called "creation") than toward the much misguided wearer, so those of us who are intrinsically interested in the cut of Art in the Movies, hotly resent the lack of artistic truth and homogenity in the presentation of pictures by the presentors.

Particularly such of us who are incurable addicts to the picture stimulant. And who, because of our unlimited love of the dramatic, but very limited purses, might happily, or rather unhappily, be compared to the unquenchable alcoholic, who, according to reports, suffers much the same torments as we do, when the urge is upon him to imbibe his dangerous synthetic gin or devastating bay-rum. Only in our own case, of course, pictures should be substituted for drinks.

Yet we do not ask the producer to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. Far from it. All we ask him to do is to feed the precious bird artistically and scientifically, so that it may lay for him more and more golden eggs, preferably of the twenty-four carat standard.

Nor is this such a chimerical or impossible request. For, just as the original demand for motion pictures had to be actually created, only a short thirty years ago, so the demand for good pictures should (and could as easily) have been created. However, given patience, enthusiasm and goodwill, we may yet turn the tide.

The Salon-The Solution

The best move toward better movies; a really scientific solution, and possibly more potent than the Academy itself, would best be achieved in the resuscitation of the Salon. Or, to term it more modernly—The "At-Home". A simple phrase mayhap, but pregnant with dramatic significance. Further on, I shall elaborate on the modus operandi of the salon. But first, by way of introduction, I should like to cut back to my remark that most pictures are merely cheap "Cloak and Suit" products.

I want to drive this metaphor even further. It is common knowledge, of course, that stupendous sums of money have been philanthropically paid to many stars because they have been forcibly obliged to lie fallow, no suitable story having been found available for them to play. Think of it! In all of Hollywood. All of America. All of the world—no story that would "tune in" with the personality of these stars!

Now it goes without saying, that the most logical place of any for producers to hunt for "personality writers" is right here in Hollywood, where the atmosphere is literally alive with film talk about film people. Moreover, we are all agreed that "personality clothes"—created exclusively for the individual (especially if the creator be an artist)—rank head and shoulders, so to speak, above the ordinary "Cloak and Suit" variety.

Hence, it seems rational that popular cinema stars should be written around with words, even as their bodies are swathed about in different materials, lines, etc., to suit their respective personalities (since producers, instead of selecting actors and actresses for their dramatic versatility, apparently find it more advantageous to cull them according to "type" or individuality).

Besides, just as painters model from life, even for a phantastic picture, how much more should the writer fashion from life, heroes, heroines and villains who must

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virtually live and breathe in their pictures, in order to create for an audience the subtle illusion of reality.

The trouble, of course, with the majority of screen pictures is just this. That they have not been modeled from the life. That the imagination has been drawn upon too freely, with the result that they are of the mechanical slot-machine calibre and do not shoot humanly true.

Often, for instance, in the adaptation of a story, the vivacious brunette lead is transfigured into a sort of chameleon blonde to suit the pot pourri tastes of producer, director, supervisor, and—well—I had almost made a faux pas and added—office boy.

But what about those Mendelian characteristics, pray, concerning, let us say, the dark pigment of the hair which should indicate warmth, expansiveness, passion and all the other more or less concommitant emotions and forms of expression? They are scrapped, of course. That is, some are and some aren't. Whereupon a sort of hodge-podge of a character is the issue.

And then we wonder why we come away from so many pictures feeling that we have been hungering for some luscious dramatic strawberry shortcake and have been served instead no cream, no strawberries—just a piece of stale cake to nibble!

I suggest, therefore, that a specialized social institution, similar in a manner to the old-fashioned French Salon, be inaugurated by the leading feminine stars in Hollywood, such as, perhaps, Mary Pickford, Norma Talmadge, Greta

Garbo, and others—who would act as hostesses to the picture salon.

These reunions should occur about once a month, and every writer in Hollywood and the neighborhood be cordially invited—nay, urged—to come and meet the histrionic lights of the picture profession.

Moreover it would be decidedly to the advantage of the producers and actors that no distinction be made in point of rank or publicity of the authors. For, one spark, the merest suggestion, is sometimes all that is necessary to set a whole story in motion. Even as the pulling of one loose thread may unravel a whole garment.

No petting, of course. No drinking. Merely a scientific gathering, if a social one, to afford both writers and actors a very essential opportunity of getting to know each other in the life. So that the writer might eventually be able to invest his story characters with human blood instead of silver nitral mercury. With individual characteristic attributes, instead of all sorts of fantastic traits synthetically thrown together at random.

For precisely, by very virtue of the exciting dramatic nature of their mode of living and their colorful personalities, are the lives of actors and actresses replete with original and unusual incidents, rich in dramatic value, real and ripe and ready to be gathered by the writer's fertile brain.

Thus—the birth, or rather development of personality pictures and for this new art—a new writing technique.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By DONALD BEATON - The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

YD CHAPLIN'S latest picture, The Missing Link, is, according to Dad, a picture for half-wits. I got quite a kick out of it, partly because I haven't seen any pictures for so long that anything looks good to me and partly because I think Syd Chaplin is funny in anything. The antics of the monkey were funny too; the rest of the picture was just trash. There was so much silly slapstick that it ruined whatever merit the picture had.

The story is a good old veteran that has been used steadily ever since moving pictures were invented. Having seen it in about thirty different pictures, I am beginning to be bored by it. It is the same old thing of lions chasing the hero, who, of course, is deathly afraid of animals. The lion stuff is too old to go over very big anyway. The only funny animal stuff was where Chaplin had his fight with the monkey, Akka. Even that was too long and drawn out. The titles were pretty good.

TECHNICALLY, Metropolis is a great picture. The sets were marvelous, and the mob direction was good. The whole picture showed wonderfully painstaking care in the production, but good production is not enough to make a good picture. The Big Parade was a great picture because it was great in every department, acting, story and production.

Metropolis had no story to speak of and the acting was mediocre.

As has been said by every critic who wrote up Metropolis, the idea of the picture was wrong. Labor is getting more emancipated all the time, and in a thousand years, if civilization keeps advancing along its present lines, there will be no such thing as a day's work. This John Masterman, head of Metropolis, was supposed to be such a fiend for efficiency, but he let men work until they were so exhausted that they made serious mistakes. No man with any sense of efficiency would allow a thing like that. The whole story was full of such inconsistencies.

All the credit for Metropolis goes to the technicians. The photography was splendid. Metropolis must have been rather hard to photograph because of all the weird machinery and lighting. I imagine that the cameraman had to devise several new tricks particularly for Metropolis. The lighting was also very well done. However, the man who designed all the sets and made all the machinery was the real artist of the picture.

FEW more pictures like Mockery will kill Lon Chaney at the box office. As a rule, pictures get some place during the unfolding of the plot, but Mockery never got anywhere. The state of affairs was about the same at the end of the picture as it was at the beginning, except that

Chaney had a few scars more. The story was nothing to speak of, but Joe Farnham's titles were, as usual, very good. They were in his customary good taste, and were punctuated very well.

According to the billings, Lon Chaney was the chief actor in Mockery. According to performances, Barbara Bedford walked off with the laurels. It is strange that she isn't given larger parts, as she certainly can act. Chaney gave a good performance, too, as he doesn't know how to give other than a good one, but the

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(Note—Reports of my return to work are premature! Shall be on the sick list until after the last game of the World Series has been broadcast.)

part didn't seem to suit him. The rest of the cast was quite adequate.

PARAMOUNT has made another picture in its campaign to ruin Bebe Daniels as a box-office attraction. The name of the atrocity is Swim Girl, Swim. All the old antique gags they had in stock were dragged into the picture, and some new ones which were almost as bad as the veterans. George Marion's titles revealed the fact that he is in urgent need of a vacation as the humor in them was terribly labored. He ought to go to Noah Beery's Trout Club and fish for

The plot of the story was as silly and far-fetched as Bebe's pictures usually are. This idea of adapting men's college stunts to girls is no good. The stuff always looks artificial and unreal. This picture was more ridiculous than the usual run, however. The man and the girl were playing tennis in front of a large crowd, yet they hugged each other without any embarrassment. The picture was full of just such silly stuff. Except for poor direction, story, and acting, the picture was quite good.

T LAST I have seen Seventh Heaven. I had heard so much about it that I thought I had no thrill coming when I saw it, but I was agreeably surprised. With the possible exception of The Big Parade, it is the greatest picture ever made. Although I have known Janet Gaynor for some time, I had never seen her on the screen until I saw Seventh Heaven. She is certainly the whole picture. From the minute she comes on the screen, she is the one who attracts all the attention. The picture is without a poor performance, but Janet tops the rest of the cast without any trouble at all. Charley Farrell gave a wonderful performance in a part that just suited him. The rest of the cast each acted well enough to feature any picture.

The direction of Seventh Heaven was perfect. There were little touches all through which contributed largely to making it such a great picture. The humor was well placed and well done and helped a lot to make the picture as good as it was. Borzage didn't put over his dramatic scenes with a lot of wild arm waving. They were done very quietly and very well. Their handling was what gave the picture the air of being perfectly directed. Who or what is to be credited for

making the picture so human is hard to say. It may have been the story, the acting, or the direction. Probably it was a little of each. The war scenes

were very well done.

THE STOLEN BRIDE was a rather silly picture, but on the whole it was quite entertaining. Scenically, it was beautiful. With two of the best looking people on the screen, Billie Dove and Lloyd Hughes, as the principals, it couldn't help but be a treat for the eyes. The photography

was well done with one exception. There was a scene between Billie Dove and Hughes in a park at night. The way it was photographed, one could hardly see the two actors it was so dark. That may have been the fault of the lighting, however. The Stolen Bride is the first picture of the European director, Korda. Compared with the beginnings of some of the foreign directors, Korda has done very well. If he never does anything worse than The Stolen Bride, he will be a pretty

good average director. As far as story was concerned, The Stolen Bride was out of luck. What story there was was as old as First National stories usually are. The story hinged upon a very far fetched The hero was born and premise. lived until he was eight or nine years old in Hungary; then he went to America and lived for twenty years. When he came back to Hungary on a visit, he was made to do three years in the Hungarian army. It is highly improbable that the hero would have lived that long in America without becoming a citizen. The story had weak spots like that all through it.

7ARNER BROTHERS have made quite a good picture in has the good, old, reliable plot of a girl taking risks to get her brother cleared of murder and the her brother cleared of murder, and the hero, really a detective, posing as a crook. There was a lot of good stuff in the police rushing to aid the hero with machine guns. There were also several gunbattles which were quite thrilling, as all the combatants seemed to be equipped with guns which could shoot several hundred times without reloading. It seemed funny that the governor could 'phone a stay of execution to the prison. I should think it would have to be a written order, otherwise anybody could ring up and stay the execution.

Hitherto, I have not liked Myrna Loy on the screen, but in this she was good. She arranged her hair differently and made it a great deal prettier. Although she is not a great actress she was quite acceptable in her part. Conrad Nagel was as good as he usually is. Every part Nagel does is perfect. He puts it over very well in his quiet way. William Russell also did very well as the gangster king.

OX seems to be quite skillful at putting plays on the screen. Cradle-Snatchers was good and so was Is Zat So? George O'Brien and Edmund Lowe make a great team as the fighter and his wise-cracking manager. The first scenes were very good, as O'Brien seems to be an excellent box-

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er. The humorous situations were very well done and so were the titles. This picture is a good sample of how good clean comedy can be. Doug Fairbanks Junior gave a very good performance. Every time I see him on the screen I like him better. Cyril Chadwick did as well as usual in his heavy role.

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THE UNIT SUPERVISOR

By MARY O'HARA

RECENTLY heard a prominent director say with great bitterness: "This is the day of the supervisor."

He was right in his statement, wrong to be bitter about it. For the arrival of the Supervisor is a step in the right direction. It amounts to a realization on the part of the producer that, after all, a picture has to be made by one man. because it is actual-

ly made by so many.

Countless cases could be cited, where there is not one-man supervision, of directors altering the entire intention of a story and making something out of their own heads quite different from what the producer intended to have made or of what the continuity called for; of writers doing the same thing, changing an original story beyond recognition for no good reason; of stars taking the reins in their own hands, downing everyone else and guiding the enterprise to some surprising conclusion; or even of an editor, looking over a picture when it is done, deciding that it needs to be "saved", and proceeding to conceive a new title and cutting and titling the picture to fit it. All evidence that oneman-supervision is indispensable.

The trouble with us now is not that we have too much supervision but that we have too little. I refer, first, to long distance supervision which, as I have shown in a previous article, is not really supervision at all; and, second, to supervision by the business manager, the one single important member of the staff who actually and admittedly knows nothing about picture-making. One hears such state-ments as this, "I'm not an artist, I'm a business man. I'm not a writer or a director, and I believe in giving my writer and director a free hand. But now, Miss So-and-so, and Mr. So-and-so, what I want is this—" and he goes on to tell them what he wants, and how to write it, and how to direct it, and just what kind of a picture this is going to be. (It is always going to be the world's best.) And as the script progresses towards production, it is he who decides all knotty points, usually without seeing the knot or knowing that it is there-and says what shall and what shall not go into the picture.

The amazing, unbelievable number of bad pictures that are being put out today are due to the fact that they are supervised either by the long distance supervisor, or by business men who have no more idea how to construct an interesting or successful photoplay than a babe unborn.

It is so obvious to me that the supervisor should be one of the actual picture-makers that I am amazed at the concerted action of producers in withholding supervisory powers from any one of the logical people who should have it. There must be a reason for it. Attempting to discover this reason, let

us for a moment put ourselves in the place of the producer and see how he thinks.

In the first place, I believe he makes one sweeping distinction in the studio workers. He divides them into "busi-ness men" and "artists". The artists are the actors and actresses, writers, directors, playwrights and editors. He, being a business man, has an inevitable sympathy with and confidence in other business men. He knows the artists are necessary, but they are strange cattle to him; they don't know on which side their bread is buttered; they can't be treated quite like ordinary human beings; they have to be indulged when necessary, managed by trickery and diplomacy; they are apt to get stubborn about amazingly small points, temperamental about anything or nothing; in fact they have to be "handled". (The word is a popular one with producers and business managers. "Let me 'handle' so-and-so-") To entrust a difficult business enterprise to them would seem the action of a fool.

There is, after all, much to confirm the producer in this opinion. There are countless instances of "artists" getting a little or much authority and running amuck with it and wasting thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars. Making a picture is fundamentally a business enterprise and must be managed as such. But making a picture is also and entirely an artistic action and it must be carried through as such. To entrust it to "artists" is to run the risk of appalling financial disaster. To entrust it to "business men" is to make practically certain of a dead, uninteresting picture.

Quite an impasse! It is the root of all the trouble and misery in the industry; the cause of bad pictures; the reason of box-office failures and of the present parlous state of affairs. Something must be re-organized! Everyone is looking in every direction at once, is trying to decide just what it is that must be re-organized. Producers are no doubt pessimistically certain that when the thing is found much money must be spent in its re-organization, and are bravely ready to spend it.

But fortunately the only thing that has to be re-organized, is the supervisor. It will cost nothing. And we have in the industry talent and ability enough to make fine pictures, once the long-distance, or businessmanager supervisor is out of the way.

However, I have not yet answered my own question. How will the producer dare to place an artist in the position of supervisor and feel that his budget is safe? Simply because all artists are not fools — are not without business sense and sagacity and sound judgment. The producer must modify his analysis of studio workers. He may say: "There are business men and there are artists." He must go further than that and admit: "But, after all, there are artists and artists." Some of them are very well able indeed to supervise all angles of picture-making and prove themselves worthy of financial responsibility besides. These are the ones whom his supervisors—one supervisor to each unit—each unit making three or four or five pictures a year.

It is a peculiar thing that business ability and artistic ability do not often go together. There seems to be some fundamental reason for their permanent and chronic disassociation. Ninety-nine out of a hundred business men have no artistic ability whatsoever, not even a real appreciation of the problems of an artist's work. They can only react. They are "audience". And it is axiomatic that the typical artist is usually a fool in business.

That is why it is so very difficult to find the ideal supervisor. He is just naturally a rare bird. But he does exist. He is the exception, but he is there, and must be looked for, searched out and put at the head of

units.

I admit that just as there is this occasional artist with business sense, so is there sometimes also the business man with-I will not say artistic talent-at least artistic appreciation; and he also is among those who can logically be supervisor. He does not know how to create the fine thing but he appreciates it when it comes along—waits stubbornly for it—refuses to be content until he has it and very likely, eventually gets it. But at what a cost! Possibly several scripts have been made, experimenting with this or that angle; perhaps more than one director has worked on the picture, and probably there have had to be many, many re-takes. I consider Irving Thalberg and Sam Goldwyn to be examples of this class. No doubt most business-manager-super-

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visors place themselves in this class, too, but they err. This type is even more rare than the artist with business sense. He is so rare that he can be said not to exist. When he does occur, it is altogether an exceptional thing.

Reminding myself that I am still, mentally, standing in the producer's shoes, I ask what other difficulties will be met in choosing a supervisor?

Well-there is always our friend. Human Nature. We are accustomed to hearing and believing that human nature is a very mixed affair—black and white—in fact, freely speckled. To say, "It's only human to do so and so," usually means some shady thing. Even so, even with great tolerance and understanding of "human nature", one stands amazed at the personalities in the moving picture industry, par-ticularly among the "artists". We are either the greediest, the meanest, the pettiest, the most mercenary, the unkindest, the least sporting, the most unfair and selfish lot that ever happened to get together, or else the conditions of working in the industry are such as to bring out the very worst side of everyone. The latter is what I believe to be true. Take away from someone something that he has worked hard for and justly earned, and in his chagrin and exasperation he turns around and passes the injustice on to someone else. After awhile he gives up hope of receiving his just due and becomes chronically warped, anxious to snatch more than his due whenever he can get away with it. Fair play hardly exists when personal interests conflict, to say nothing of any pride in giving value received. The most exalted personages are reduced to a frank admittance of bald, mercenary

These rather warped personalities are the ones which the producer has to think of when he surveys the field of "artists" to choose a supervisor. Naturally quite discouraging. But the system I have outlined in this and the foregoing articles would change all that. Once put real supervisory power in the hands of writer, or director, or playwright, or photographic artist— put him on his mettle to produce a fine picture within his budget and time schedule-make him know that, good or bad, it will be branded with his name, and inevitably a totally different side of him should emerge. He has nothing to fight against now. Indeed he may quite wisely be a little frightened at his great responsibility, for he has only one thing to do-make a good picture within his budget. He will not be able to complain that anyone got in his way and prevented him, because his word is law. If he is a writer he will be anxious to know what changes the director would like to make in the script, in case they may give the picture some added value, rather than, as now, antago-nistic to changes suggested by the director, fearing that the director will take the stand that "he had to do the continuity all over", and that if the

picture is a success the writer had nothing to do with it. And if the director is the supervisor, how eager he will be really to probe all that is in the writer's mind—draw him out on every little half-expressed worry on this small point, or that, lest some hidden snag should go undiscovered and remain there to make trouble later on. Real collaboration! Real appreciation of each other's work and abilities! How little there is of that now.

The business manager will, of course, have a very important position in the Unit. To begin with, he will be engaged directly by the supervisor, and not by the producer, as will all the members of the staff. There must be no possibility of any rebellious member of the unit going over the head of the supervisor and appealing to the producer. The producer under no circumstances can have anything to do with forming the unit-with employing the different members of it, or paying them. That must be all in the supervisor's hands, and the producer deals only with the supervisor. If this were not so, if the producer formed the unit and then handed it to the artist-supervisor, the result would be much the same confusion, double-crossing, working at cross-purposes, even deliberate spying and betrayal, that we have at present, and would defeat the main purpose of the unit, namely, sympathetic, honest collaboration.

The business manager, engaged by the supervisor, will be his right-hand man. He will do all that he does now, except supervise-except make any final decisions-except do any of the actual picture-making, casting, play-wrighting, or editing. He will stand between the artist-supervisor and all the arduous business details, business conversations, bargaining, contracts, arrangements for sets, locations, props, and actors. His will be a great responsibility. But where there is under consideration some expenditure of money, and artist-supervisor and business manager disagree as to its advisability, the final say is the supervisor's. On his shoulders be it, if he is wrong. He is always the only one to decide what does and what does not go into the picture. Anyone who is inharmonious in the unit, who can not collaborate, who is rebellious and troublesome, must promptly be gotten rid of by the supervisor.

There are those who say that writers should always have the au-

thority in picture-making-should be the supervisors. There are some who say directors should. But this is the way it seems to me. Sometimes a writer is fitted to supervise a picture understands a director's problems and work as well as his own-has the natural qualifications of a leader (a very important point), and sometimes he has not. The same with a director. The supervisor could be any one of the four picture-makers, writer, director, playwright, photographic artist, provided he also has business judgment, natural leadership and authority, broad-mindedness and toleration and patience, and an understanding of the importance of the work of the other three as well as his own.

At present, no doubt many "big" directors would refuse to work in a unit, supervised by a writer, and vice versa. Why should this be? If one is "big" enough, one will eventually supervise one's own unit. To establish such a system by working with a will to make it successful, would be of untold benefit to writers and directors

both.

I have the interests of the motion picture deeply at heart. I love it and believe in it and rejoice in its inevitable and great future, and worry over its present difficulties and hitches. I am anxious to see it established upon some basis which will permit of its really functioning; and I believe this basis would be provided by the unit

system under the artist-supervisor.

My final plea to the producer to give this a trial may be strengthened by the fact that it would be so easy—so cheap a trial. No need to upset any existent working conditions. No need for any big re-organization. One single independent unit, formed exactly as I have described, could be placed by the producer in a large studio without causing a ripple in its activity. If it proved successful, others would follow. The leaven in the loaf! And so the re-organization of the methods of making pictures would take place from within quietly and powerfully, like a growth, without any unheaval.

like a growth, without any upheaval.

This method, I have no doubt at all, is the picture-making method of the future. God speed the day!

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Rudolph Valentino	. 96	Clara Bow	. 85
John Barrymore			
Lon Chaney	. 92	Mary Pickford	. 81
John Gilbert		Marion Davies	
Ronald Colman	. 85	Vilma Banky	. 80
Wallace Beery	82		
Richard Dix			. 79

Per ce	ent.
FRED DE GRESAC	100
Bess Meredyth	92
Laurence Stallings	91
Frances Marion	
John McDermott	87
Lenore Coffee	86
Dorothy Farnum	
Elliott Clawson	
Hans Kraly	84
Ben Glazer	

(ADVE	RTISEMENT)
THE BOX	K-OFFICE'S
ROLL of	HONOR
(Percentages represent batting av	verages of the different personalities on
	months, as reported in The Spectator
	ugust 20.)
STARS Per cent	STARS Per cent.
CHAS. CHAPLIN100	NORMA TALMADGE 87
DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS100 HAROLD LLOYD100	
Rudolph Valentino	
John Barrymore 93	Colleen Moore 84
Lon Chaney	Mary Pickford 81 Marion Davies 80
Ronald Colman 85	Vilma Banky 80
Wallace Beery	Bebe Daniels79
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Bess Meredyth	92 s 91
Frances Marion	
John McDermott	
Dorothy Farnum	86
Elliott Clawson	
Hans Kraly Ben Glazer	
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DIRECTORS	SUPERVISORS
KING VIDOR96	IRVING THALBERG 85
Fred Niblo 95	John Considine Jr. 84
Cecil B. de Mille 91	Winnie Sheehan 80
Geo. Fitzmaurice 90	Ben Schulberg
Eddle Sutherland	Lloyd Sheldon
Von Stroheim85	Jack Warner 78
Tod Browning 84	Julian Johnston 78
Clarence Badger 84	Eric Pommer

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Edited by WELFORD BEATON

THE 20 Cents FILM SPECTATOR

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Hollywood, California, October 29, 1927

No. 5

Raoul Walsh's eating and legs epic

We make reply to eastern bankers

Time is ripe for actors to organize

Foreigners taking all the good jobs

Hays heads a vicious organization

Winnie Sheehan's great Irish heart

SYMPHONY

THE WHITE LIE

LEGS OF CARMEN

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EVERY OTHER SATURDAY

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Welford Beaton, President and Editor

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He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., OCTOBER 29, 1927

Raoul Walsh and the Art of Eating

THEN a director strikes a new note in his work it is not to be expected that when he first presents it it will be developed so fully that further improvement will not be possible. The director who can not expand an idea is slipping. Some years ago Raoul Walsh made Carmen into a picture, and I believe it was the first time he presented an audience with his charming and whimsical conception of eating, as screen entertainment. James Marcus was in the cast. Jim, as you know, is large -fat, in fact-and has an extraordinary spread of chest. In this early Walsh picture he wore a beard, and when he faced the camera with his shirt open in front it was revealed that his chest was quite bushy. A scene showed him eating food from a bowl. He ate in the Raoul Walsh style, meaning that he wolfed his food and slobbered a lot of it over his whiskers, accommodating the overflow in the hair on his chest. It was a very pretty scene, but the artist in Walsh yearned for further expression, and he had an inspiration. He had Jim pause, his food drooling from his mouth, and catch a cootie that was crawling in the hair somewhere near his stomach. It was shown in a close-up, a beautiful, tender and poetic close-up. In every Walsh picture we have eating scenes, but the director never again has reached the sublime height that he achieved in the cootie hunt. In What Price Glory? Victor McLaglen was the man selected for the eating. He slobbered a great deal, sprinkled half-chewed food on people with whom he talked, and we were treated to some very pretty scenes of the interior of his mouth when he was chewing meat. Walsh did fairly well in giving us these scenes, but his touch was not quite so exquisite as it was when he had the cootie inspiration. Again in The Legs of Carmen Walsh slips. Here we have Vic portraying all the niceties that pigs do in swill troughs, but we are denied the cootie and the views of the interior of his mouth. As I remember Vic's frontal exposure it is not particularly furry, but surely Walsh could have strapped a toupee around his stomach and sprinkled a few cooties on it. I was not the only one who found the eating scenes in The Legs of Carmen inadequate. People sitting near me refused to look at them, and when I realized that I was to be denied the cootie, I looked at the ceiling every time Vic began his wolfing. The scenes no doubt were inserted to establish the fact that toreadors eat. It so happened that I already was aware of that interesting fact. I was in a restaurant in Madrid one day when my attention was attracted to a commotion caused by the arrival of three men, handsome fellows, graceful, refined and models of deportment. My waiter informed me that one of them was the most famous bull-fighter in Spain, and that the other two were but slightly less famous for their grace and skill at the same sport. They were shown to the table next to mine, and as I watched them I wondered how men apparently so refined and cultured, and with such nice table manners, could ruthlessly torture inoffensive bulls. It must have been a decadent day in the bullfighting era that I was in Spain. I thank Walsh and McLaglen for removing the impression I acquired then. Bull-fighters, I gather from this picture, are not the nice-mannered fellows I saw in Spain, nor do they eat in a manner that would leave untroubled the stomach of anyone watching them. They go at their food as a starved wolf would, and they curse with their mouths stuffed with it. It is a good thing for the world that Fox made this picture. But for it, we might indefinitely have gone on thinking that hogs are the only animals that get smeared all up with greasy food. Walsh shows us in What Price Glory? and The Legs of Carmen that United States army captains and Spanish bull-fighters not only adopt the same method of eating, but embellish it with some flourishes that the fattest hog never thought of. Great is the educational value of screen entertainment!

Other Gems from "Legs of Carmen"

R AOUL WALSH is a gifted genius. He adapted Prosper Merimee's story of Carmen, and while I have not read the original I am confident that it could not have contained all the delightful touches with which Walsh adorns his screen version. The Legs of

IN CHARACTER

You say you saw me at a dance last night,
With a girl flirtatious and as bold as brass,
That such philandering, you think's not treating right
The wife whom I should love, a modest lass,
Who'd be heartbroken if she did but know
My derelictions and the pace I go.

What's that? You heard about a week-end trip I took,
Accompanied by a languorous-eyed, exotic dame,
Whose haughty mien and somewhat disdainful look,
You thought, a cloak to cover up her shame
At being seen accompanied by a roue like me
Who flouts the rules of plain propriety.

And other girls you've heard about? Enough!
My "modest" wife would laugh if she could hear your story:

story;
Strange as it seems, she fairly eats such stuff—
These scandal-breaths are vespers straight from Glory;
No gossip of your wagging tongues can hurt
When you think you see me with some other skirt.

The reason—well, you see, my wife's so temperamental She fairly lives the roles her Thespian art portrays; She's bold in love or coyly sentimental,

In character with each part she takes in plays. And I—you're right, I am, in very truth, a sinner: Each different girl is she. I fall, and try to win her.

-GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN.

Carmen is an exquisite picture that all the children should see. It reflects Winnie Sheehan and Sol Wurtzel in their loftiest moments. Heretofore I have criticized them for showing us scenes of young girls undressing. Winnie, they say, is a great showman, but apparently is not above taking advice. He and Sol and Raoul do not show us a girl undressing in this picture, but they show us all that is necessary of a young girl without having her go to the trouble of undressing. There is one large close-up of the girl from the hips down, putting on her stockings. Close-ups, I am told, are for the purpose of putting over points that the audience would miss in a medium or long shot. No doubt some narrow-minded person, ignorant of the exactions of cinematic art, would argue that only a degenerate would show in a close-up nothing but the legs of a pretty and refined girl, but he would be wrong. Undoubtedly Walsh's finer sense recoiled when he felt himself called upon to make that close-up, but he is above all an artist, and a great art must be served. It was absolutely necessary that the audience should know that the girl was putting on her stockings, and that she was not playing "this little pig goes to market." Walsh, a refined gentleman who would do nothing to debase screen art, realized of course that to plant the fact of the putting on of stockings he would have to photograph the legs, but even that fact did not cause him to swerve one inch from the straight line of allegiance to the art which he so blindly serves. That his resolution did not spring from but one moment of strong determination to be true to that art, was demonstrated later in the gipsy camp sequence when he shows us a close-up of Carmen's drawers. Again he must have recoiled, and no doubt Winnie and Sol pleaded with him to be sure of himself before going ahead, for Winnie, the great showman, and Sol, the business genius who pays Janet Gaynor one-tenth what she is worth to his firm, know that only when screen art is making its last desperate stand may a girl's drawers be waved in the face of an audience. To the credit of Raoul, and Winnie, and Sol be it said that they put behind them considerations of their own mothers, and wives, and daughters; that they sacrificed on the altar of screen art their own conception of refinement and good taste, and with sobs rending their breasts and tears blinding their eyes, yielded to the inexorable demands of an unyielding art and acquainted the audience with the fact that it was Carmen's drawers that Jose washed, and not her undershirt. But, if they will permit me, I would like to suggest that they overlooked an opportunity for a good tie-up. To balance this scene there should have been one later showing Carmen washing Jose's B. V. D.'s, with Jose standing beside her, waiting for them. There is a beautiful thought in it, but when they were engaged in making a picture containing so many beautiful thoughts it is no wonder that one or two others escaped Raoul, and Winnie, and Sol. The comedy touches in The Legs of Carmen are simply delightful. I thought I'd die every time Escamillo patted Carmen immediately in the rear of her hips. The fellow who thought of that must be a regular cut-up. The only danger of putting that kind of delicious comedy in a picture is that it is too subtle for some people, and can be appreciated only by a keen mind. For instance, a woman sitting in front of me -she has written several novels and last season had a play produced in New York-said over her shoulder to me that the playful slaps were "vulgar and disgusting." Raoul,

and Winnie, and Sol will get a good laugh when I hand them that one. Imagine trying to get comedy down to the mental level of a woman who hasn't done anything more than write novels and plays! On the way out of the theatre she told me that the whole picture was the product of degenerate minds, that it was a filthy exhibition of the depths to which screen art could be sunk by people who are a disgrace to it. But don't let that keep you away from The Legs of Carmen. It is a picture that you ought to smell once, anyway.

In Which We Answer Some Eastern Bankers

THERE is a multiplicity of evidence tending to show the lively interest that Wall Street is taking in motion pictures. As our film productions must be made efficiently if they are to achieve all their artistic possibilities, Hollywood's interest in the attitude of Wall Street is direct. The screen is an art that can express itself only within the limits set by finance. A starving painter can take his palette and brush and produce a masterpiece, but a film creation is something that concerns a banker. Only when the motion picture industry is run to produce the greatest amount of money will the degree of art it attains be all that we could expect from it. At present it is managed by people who have no idea whatever of efficiency, and who regard it solely as something to be exploited for their own gain. As a result, as entertainment it is not keeping pace with the public's demand for greater perfection, which, in its turn, is the only thing that can make it produce the greatest financial returns. Wall Street is beginning to appreciate this, and it is going to insist upon more efficiency, which will bring to the surface the submerged brains of the industry. Therefore, every creative artist in pictures should root for Wall Street. Anything printed about the way pictures are run apparently is read with interest in Eastern financial circles. Not a week goes by that The Spectator does not add several banks and bond houses to its subscription list. A letter comes to me, written on the stationery of one of the largest financial firms in New York. "It might interest you to know," it reads in part, "that at a round table in a restaurant where vice-presidents of New York banks have lunch together, there were to-day representatives of nine different banks, all of which, it was revealed, take your paper, and each of the nine vice-presidents reads it as part of his banking duties. Someone mentioned that you had written something to the effect that no industry in the country offered such glowing prospects to capital as the motion picture industry. Most of those who joined in the discussion apparently have begun reading The Spectator since you published this article. It was agreed that I should write and ask if you would be good enough to incorporate in some future number your reasons for believing that pictures would be a profitable field for the investment of capital. This bank has made loans to producing companies and we always read with interest anything you write about the way the companies are managed." An industry that can produce profits in spite of the amazing inefficiency of its management, surely could return many times the profit if it were managed properly. Bankers, however, are not partial to general statements. For their sakes, and at the danger of threshing over some

old straw, we will consider specific abuses. Possibly what the industry lacks most now is common honesty. Its moral tone is low. I am not referring to petty lapses, such as the graft that is rampant in nearly all the casting departments where selected lists of favorites buy parts in pictures, nor to private houses that are completed and grounds that are improved with materials charged in studios against productions. Nor have I in mind purchasing agents who assess people from whom they make purchases. Such things are unimportant, and can not be eradicated. The large personnel which the industry demands will have its percentage of petty thieves, a percentage no greater than banks would have if their methods were as loose. The low moral tone to which I refer is blamable on those who run the business, and against whom I make no charge of a lack of personal integrity. The industry has no standardized ethics. In purchasing its raw materials, stories, and the brains of actors and directors, it is actuated solely by a desire to pay as little as possible, and not at all by what the thing purchased is worth. Those who countenance such a policy pay themselves salaries ludicrously large and regulate the price they pay an author by the urgency of the demands of his stoniach.

Exhibitors Misled on Cost of Pictures

OTION pictures have not learned the elemental fact that the only good customer is a contented one. They are at war constantly with the people who buy their productions. I doubt if one of the big producers ever sells a picture without representing it falsely. I will cite some instances. When Edmund Goulding began to shoot Anna Karenina there was charged against the production two hundred and twenty thousand dollars that had been wasted on previous attempts to make it, an amount chargeable to the incompetency of those whose duty it was to make the picture economically. It cost Goulding perhaps one hundred and eighty thousand dollars to make the picture. When Mauritz Stiller began to shoot Hotel Imperial there was one charge against it of one hundred and ninety thousand dollars, the amount paid Pola Negri as salary while she was idle prior to the beginning of work on the picture. Added to this was what it cost to bring Erich Pommer from Berlin, his salary, expenses in New York for two weeks, and his trip across the continent. Actually making the picture cost one hundred and eighty thousand dollars. Anna Karenina and Hotel Imperial are offered to the exhibitors on the basis of having cost four hundred thousand dollars each. Not half of this eight hundred thousand dollars is represented in any way in what the exhibitor buys and what the public pays to see. Studio inefficiency simply is passed on to the public to be absorbed, and the studio goes about its business of making the next production just as inefficiently. Pictures make a profit because they disown their losses and refuse to recognize their blunders. A producer will advance as an argument that whatever is spent on a production must be charged against it, even though a large percentage of it be spent unwisely, for there is no other place to charge it. I'll grant that that may be good bookkeeping, but nothing can persuade me that it is an excuse for lying to a producer about the cost of a picture. But

the method of charging off the cost of blunders is not the important thing. What matters is that the blunders should be made. When people with real financial intelligence take over the business they will not tolerate the blunders. They will disappear along with the people now responsible for them. Pictures can be made as close to a properly formed estimate as a building can be constructed within a certain cost. There is no more reason why two hundred and twenty thousand dollars should be charged against Anna Karenina before its actual construction begins than there would have been to have had a similar charge against the Roosevelt Hotel before they began to dig the basement. Producers will laugh at this statement and tell you that the ordinary rules of manufacturing can not be applied to pictures. It is obvious that they must believe it, for if they knew how to make pictures properly they would do so. They are hopelessly and woefully incompetent, yet they control one of the most lucrative businesses on earth. They could not hold out for two years against intelligent competition. They have trained an extensive army of people who are skilled in every branch of the industry. These men and women are in Hollywood now, praying to be allowed to make pictures the way they should be made. They are the people who are making the pictures we get now, the deplorable contributions to a great art, but it is not their fault that their work shows such poor results. They are held down to the dead level of grossly stupid management. They are available to people with business brains who could not invest money where it would earn larger dividends. For a time new producers would have to battle for houses, but this drawback is righting itself rapidly. As I pointed out in the last Spectator, there is so much money invested in film theatres that it has become a small matter who makes the pictures shown in them. The investments must be protected, and the only sure protection is a better class of pictures.

Hollywood Losing European Market

T NO time in the screen's history have a few of its pictures been better and the great majority worse. This year has witnessed the release of some superb films, and others equally meritorious remain to be released, but all told they do not number more than a dozen, and we have the whole world demanding continuous screen entertainment. Hollywood has been supplying the greater part of the demand, and could have captured still more of the market if the quality of its product had been on an ascending scale. But its pictures are becoming worse and it rapidly is losing the lucrative European market, England, France, Germany, and Sweden are entering the production field on a constantly increasing scale because their picture patrons are demanding a better class of entertainment than Hollywood is providing. I dined the other night with representatives of the film industry in England, Germany, and France, and was told by all three that Hollywood was forcing their countries to make their own pictures. The exhibitors in the three countries, I was told, were in the business solely to make money, and did not care where the pictures that would make money for them were made. They were not prejudiced against American-made films, but their patrons were turning against them, thus forcing the exhibitors to lend support to the efforts of their own

countrymen to supply the quality of entertainment that they failed to get from Hollywood. American films are definitely on the decline in the European market at a time when Hollywood should be capitalizing its twenty years of experience in making pictures and turning out films that would complete its conquest of the world. But while it is still in the formative stage American screen art is losing its grip on the popularity of the world. It is deplorable that this should happen at a time when Hollywood has within its borders brilliant picture minds capable of producing films that would add to American prestige and increase the volume of our foreign trade. If pictures had been from their inception in the hands of people capable of conducting the business capably, to-day there scarcely would be a producing company at work outside the United States. Europe is turning to its own films not because they are good, but because those we send it are worse. Every governmental action in a foreign country to curtail the importation of American-made films is attributable to their poor quality. If our pictures had continued to please there would have been no agitation for such action. The inefficiency of the Laskys, Mayers, Foxes, Warners and the others thus becomes a national matter. When these men are supplanted by executives of the calibre that Wall Street can command, the decline of our film exports will be checked and the world will look again to Hollywood for its screen entertainment. Instead of Will Hays, whose chief duty is to force the producers to live up to a code of ethics that a sense of decency would compel them to observe without forcing, there should be at the head of the industry a great, constructive executive like Hoover. Making pictures is a business to which business brains are not applied. Such being the case, it offers a rare opportunty for those possessing such brains. A few producing companies conducted with the sanity that the present ones lack, could recapture the foreign market that now is slipping away from us, and in this country could force the pictures of our present producers out of their own houses. Wall Street rapidly is grasping the fact that a field for the advantageous investment of money is under the control of people who are making it yield but a fraction of its possibilities. That is something that Wall Street can not tolerate. It is a grasping street that wrings the last dollar out of everything it touches. It will appreciate that good pictures make more money than poor ones, something that our present producers can not get into their heads, and with the coming of Wall Street to Hollywood will dawn the Renaissance of screen art.

Too Many Foreigners Are Taking the Jobs

UR producers have to their credit the achievement of making their inefficiency so pronounced that it is fascinating as a subject for study. Some of its manifestations are hard to believe even when you contemplate them. When German-made pictures began to attract the attention of the world, Paramount did a sensible thing. It found that Erich Pommer, the head of Ufa, had more notable pictures to his credit than any other man living, and it brought him to Hollywood to put into Paramount pictures the quality for which Variety, The Last Laugh, Faust, and other such films are indebted to his great picture brain. Then Paramount did a very

foolish thing. Instead of letting Pommer teach it how they made successful pictures abroad, it insisted upon teaching him to make pictures in the American way. If all it wanted were American pictures, why spend a lot of money in bringing Pommer over? Having brought him over, why not let him earn his salary? Pommer remained with Paramount just long enough to bring Fola Negri back to life and to demonstrate that Mauritz Stiller, spurned by Irving Thalberg, was a great director. Then he insisted that his contract be terminated, and he went to Metro, where after six months of life on the lot he declined to remain on the terms offered him. Now he is on his way back to Berlin where he will put into pictures all his old skill, which has been amplified by what he has learned during his eighteen months in Hollywood. Paramount brought him over because he was a powerful competitor, made him still more powerful, and sent him back. That is the kind of incapacity which I claim is fascinating. Equally fascinating is the contemplation of the manner in which those controlling the industry have reduced its morale to a low ebb. While hundreds of skilled and experienced actors are walking the streets looking for work, the producers continue to import so many foreign players that when one visits some of the lots he feels inclined to ask to be directed to the American consul. When all the studios are working to capacity, which they never do at one time, the largest number of stars and featured players they can employ is twelve hundred and twenty. That is the peak which never is reached. Six hundred is about the limit of those engaged at one time. There are possibly about twenty-six hundred such players in Hollywood, men and women who are capable of filling capably any parts assigned to them. This means that at all times two thousand of them are without work. Despite this, the importation of foreign players goes on unchecked and in flagrant violation of the immigration quota laws. While American players and directors are starving, more and more foreigners are brought in to make permanent the starvation period. On file in the immigration department at Washington are more than eight hundred letters from Will Hays making special pleas for the admission of individual foreigners. I am a champion of the platitude that art has no nationality, but I am still a greater champion of the claims of the American stomach. The American screen industry is not conducted as an American institution. It is rankly disloyal at heart. I rejoice in the presence here of such great artists as Pola Negri and Emil Jannings, but I protest against the presence in casts of other foreigners playing parts that American players can play as well. The producers' plea that the public wants new faces is ridiculous. The whole history of the stage and screen teaches us that the public wants to see its old favorites in a succession of vehicles with merit enough to maintain their popularity. The folly of the policy of importation of foreigners becomes apparent when we stop to consider that the American screen is engaged in the process of teaching other nationals all it knows, and

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that ultimately they will return to their own countries and put what they have learned into pictures that will compete with ours. There is not a foreigner working in American pictures who does not hold in low esteem those who make them, and who is not living for the day when he can return home and use against us the knowledge he is acquiring here. But if another wants to get past Ellis Island he may rely upon the help of Will Hays.

Time Is Ripe for Actors to Organize

RODUCERS encourage the flow of foreigners to Hollywood because they wish to lower the salaries they have been paying American actors. They wish to pay less money although a large fraction of the smaller amount is sent out of the country, while all of the larger amount is spent here. In this economical disloyalty they have the hearty support of Will Hays. Producers are organized and present a solid front to the unorganized actors. United States federal authorities are proceeding against all the larger producing organizations on several specific charges, and on "other abuses which may come to light during the course of the proceedings." Here is an opportunity for actors, but I doubt if they have enough brains and resourcefulness to take advantage of it, despite the fact that the producers have put all the cards in the actors' hands. This is the situation: The producers have brought to Hollywood nearly all the foreign artists of standing. All the American screen actors are here also. Thus outside Hollywood there are practically no screen artists. All of them are here. If they organized and presented just demands to the producers, the latter would be forced to yield to the demands, for there is no source from which to draw other artists to take the place of those now here who would not work if they were not granted fair treatment. In Equity the actors—my references to them always include actresses—have a weapon already at hand. During the recent salary-cut flurry the actors almost did a sensible thing: they nearly joined Equity, but at the last moment became fools and allowed themselves to be influenced by misguided oratory. It was urged that the producers were abandoning the salary cut and thereafter would treat the actors fairly, thus removing any reason for organization. The union of screen actors with Equity was averted by the astute producers, who proceeded to break every promise they made. Salaries have been cut, are being cut, and will continue to be cut, and the poor fools of actors still are unorganized. They seem to be laboring under the impression that they can move only in mass formation, an impression that is strengthened by the blundering incapacity of Equity officials. It need not be a mass movement. A quiet canvass for members can be made, and those actors of standing who are broke because they can not secure work should be given one year in which to pay the initiation fee and dues. When sufficient members were enrolled an advance on producers could be made. I am assuming that the foreigners already here would give the movement support because they are as much interested as the resident Americans in seeing that their earning power is not jeopardized by the further importation of foreigners. Concurrently with the demand on the producers that the actors now here should be supplied with work before any more are brought in, should

be representation to Washington in favor of the strict enforcement of the quota law and against further yielding to the blandishments of Will Hays. There should be filed with the proper authorities a brief setting forth that the Hays body is organized in restraint of trade in respect to actors, writers, and directors. The government is proceeding against the producers on economic grounds, with the exception of the charge that they make false representations in advertising their pictures. Incidentally, the spectacle of the government of the United States bringing all its resources to bear in an effort to make the leaders in one of its great industries stop lying is an ennombling one. The social aspect of the situation, the manner in which the producers treat those upon whose brains the whole industry rests, not yet has been brought into the case. This can be done only when those possessing the brains organize, and if I be right in my presumption that they have brains that function, they will organize.

AKING out a case against the producers for acting

Hays Organization In Restraint of Trade

in restraint of trade in their dealings with their employees would not be difficult. By going back a year or two several thousand cases might be cited. Let us select one as a sample. Before she was of age Janet Gaynor signed a contract with William Fox whereby she was to receive a salary of three hundred dollars per week for the first year, with an increase of one hundred dollars per year for the four succeeding years. At the time of signing it she was not a free agent in respect to offering her services to the highest bidder, for she already was under contract to Fox. That she was browbeaten and subjected to mental torment before she signed the new contract is a gauge of the chivalry of the Fox organization, but I do not offer it as affecting her case. During the time that elapsed between the signing of the contract and her coming of age, Janet gave the finest performance ever given by a girl or woman on the screen, that of Diane in Seventh Heaven; and did equally meritorious work in Sunrise, the two performances gaining her recognition as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, actress on the screen. My personal opinion is that she is the greatest, but my interest in her is as a charming youngster, as sweet as a breeze that comes across a field of clover, as unspoiled as a rose that just has bloomed, whose only ambitions are to meet Mary Pickford, to keep on loving her mother, and to act. She has no thought of money, but after her last experience in contract signing she placed her business affairs in the hands of Milton Cohen, and forgot them. Cohen went through the formality of notifying Fox that Janet would not affirm her contract when she became of age. This meant that on the sixth of October, when she became of age, her contract with Fox expired and she was ready to consider offers from all producers. There is not a producing organization in Hollywood that would not be overjoyed to have Janet Gaynor as its star at a salary of anywhere from three thousand a week to twice that amount. Did Cohen get an offer for her services? He did not. For once in their lives the gentlemen forming the Hays organization lived up to their gentlemen's agreement in restraint of trade. Janet is looked upon as Fox property, and she either must work

for Fox at any figure he wishes to pay her, or retire from the screen. Cohen had both a legal and a moral right to terminate her contract, but neither legality nor morals count with the Hays organization. It proceeds on the theory that Fox gave Janet her chance, and it forces all its members to keep their hands off. Gave her a chance for what? To work for five years for one-tenth what she is worth? To encounter on every hand girls with onequarter her box-office value getting four times her salary? Fox gave her her chance! Fox would deny God the credit for putting into Janet Gaynor's eyes the reflection of a soul that reaches out from the screen and grips the hearts of those in front. However, that is not the point. The actors in Hollywood should organize and present the Janet Gaynor case to the federal authorities as a test case. Substantiating the charge that the Hays organization acted in restraint of trade would be a simple matter. It would be necessary only to put its members as individuals on the stand and ask each of them two questions-Would you like to have Janet Gaynor making pictures for you? Why did you not bid for her services when she was at liberty? Forcing the Hays organization to discontinue its vicious practices is but one thing, even though a mighty important one, that screen artists could do if they were united in a body as strong as their numbers make possible. It is not necessary that any individual should imperil his standing with producers by heading the movement. If Equity is too dead to father it, a strong committee representing the Masquers' Club could work quietly until the time to appear in the open came. The producers are wily antagonists, but they are wrong, and a little thought will beat them. It is not hard to fight with a man with cracks in his armor.

Winnie Sheehan's Great Irish Heart

HARLIE FARRELL, a great artist who shares with Janet Gaynor the glory of Seventh Heaven, is another to whom Fox "gave a chance." Farrell gave such an extraordinary performance when he got his chance that Winnie Sheehan's great Irish heart went out to him. Winnie, the dear lad, quite impulsively and without stopping to consider the rashness of his act, raised Charlie's salary to two hundred dollars a week. Just a moment, please. Don't cheer yet—not until you've heard all of it. Winnie put Charlie under a long-term contract calling for the truly magnificent increase every six months of twentyfive dollars a week! Fox pays Janet Gaynor and Charlie Farrell put together one-third what he pays Olive Borden alone; he pays the team that made Seventh Heaven worth several million dollars to him, one-fifth what he pays Madge Bellamy. The combined salaries of Janet and Charlie are one-seventh what Charlie Ray draws, onetenth what Betty Compson demands. Fox urges that he gave them their chance, but what chance did he take? If their box-office value decreases he can drop both of them or either of them at the end of any six months' period; if it increases, they have to remain on the Fox lot for the full term of the contract. And this is the form of contract that all actors work under. They can be fired at any time, but they can not resign. I doubt if such a contract could be upheld successfully in the higher courts, but at present it operates under the benediction of Will

Hays, the psalm-singing elder whom the producers hire to make them look respectable, and who countenances every form of trickery they resort to under cover. If there were an ounce of sincerity in the soul of Will Hays, if he would listen to one of his own speeches and take it seriously, if he differed from a cheap politician in something more than that he is not cheap, he would see that the producers gave equitable contracts to actors, writers and directors. Hays is against every man and woman in the industry except those in the small group that pays his salary. These people are organized-perhaps a score of them. And they play ducks and drakes with ten thousand others because the ten thousand are fools. If they were not fools they would organize. The actors should be the first to do it. They should insist upon contracts which provided for the optional clause being mutual; that is, a contract which allowed the actor the privilege of cancelling the contract on the stipulated dates when the producer had the same privilege. And they should demand an eighthour day. In an industry in which so many insane things are done it is difficult to contemplate the insanity comparatively, but sometimes I think that the prize bit of lunacy is the impression which the producers have that you can not apply proper hours to picture-making. They actually think that the film business is unlike any other on earth. Well, let us suppose that at five-thirty tomorrow afternoon everyone working in pictures leaves his studio and stays away until nine o'clock the next morning; that this happens indefinitely, the only variation being that the studios close at one o'clock on Saturdays. Suppose that this began suddenly, to-morrow-would pictures cease to be? Would the cinema houses throughout the world close their doors? No. The industry simply would adjust itself to the new hours, and would make pictures better and more cheaply than it is making them now. As long as ten thousand people in pictures are content to bear the yoke of twenty producers the present hours will prevail. As long as Will Hays's ethetical standard continues to be the inspiration for the management of the industry, just so long will that management continue its illegal, dishonest, and dishonorable practices.

Close-up of the Hays Organization

ET us go into the Janet Gaynor case further in order that we may obtain a close-up of the Hays organization in operation. Men who hold back the crowd to give a bully free rein in abusing a weaker opponent, share the blame for the abuse. They are as guilty as the one who inflicts it. The greatest culprit among them is the man who can prevent it, but who won't. It have stated that Janet Gaynor put her business affairs into the hands of Milton Cohen, who is the legal adviser for many screen people. Having such an adviser is an accepted institution. Producers are used to conferring with these advisers when they wish to transact business with their clients. There was nothing unusual in Janet's employment of Cohen, and the usual procedure would have been for Sheehan to confer with Cohen about a new contract for Janet. But Cohen is a lawyer of ability, and Sheehan had no stomach for a discussion of the case with a man of experience. Young girls who are inexperienced in the affairs of the world, who have no weapon against his powers of persuasion,

sincerity, are as formidable antagonists as his valor finds agreeable. He refused to see Cohen, and insisted upon negotiating with Janet herself. His first move was to send Robt. M. Yost, his publicity man, to Janet with the advice to discharge Cohen. This Janet refused to do. She said that she wanted Mr. Cohen to conduct her business in order that she could devote all her thoughts to making good pictures for nice Mr. Sheehan. Then Yost asked what she was paying Cohen, and Janet replied that that was a matter between her and Mr. Cohen. Yost protested that Sheehan's only interest was to save Janet money, and Janet's reply was that the money she earned was her own, and she could spend it as she saw fit. Yost's fruitless attack was the first move in the campaign to wear down the superb artist who has so much to do, at three hundred dollars a week, with making Seventh Heaven and Sunrise worth so many millions to Fox. At this writing the wearing down process is going on still. Sheehan, too cowardly to stand up to a man and discuss the case, is engaged in a campaign to take all the spirit out of a little girl in order that he can get her name on a contract by which she will be paid only a fraction of what she is worth to his firm. The great Winnie, whose skin-deep smile is known on two continents, whose affability is extolled by the film trade papers, and whose personal taste in screen entertainment is symbolized by a close-up of a pair of woman's drawers, preens himself on his valor as he contrives to deprive a fatherless girl of her legal protector in order that he can do battle with her alone. She still is working on the Fox lot in a picture being directed by Frank Borzage. I advised her to walk off the set. "Oh, I couldn't do that to Mr. Borzage!" she protested, which gives us a glimpse of her fine fibre. While Sheehan continues his persecution, so despicable that it disgraces the film industry by being part of it, and so cruel and cowardly that it should lose him the respect of all decent people who love fair play, the men forming the Hays organization, in effect, stand on the sidelines and applaud him. Every one of them is as guilty as Sheehan. Each of them knows that Janet is a free agent, each of them would like to engage her, but all of them stand aside and cheer the brave and stalwart Winnie as he enters the lists against a slip of a girl, whose sweetness, sensitiveness and purity are the things that he would steal to sell to the world. And Hays, who so tearfully tells us that his heart is filled with considerations of the welfare of the whole industry, pussy-foots about, and hypocritically and unctiously pats Winnie and his cowardly supporters on the back. There's the Hays organization for you! There's the organization that made solemn promises to the personnel of the industry and broke every one of them. And the poor fools who compose the personnel stand for it because they lack a leader with enough spirit to whip them into an organization that will fight back. The Janet Gaynor case should not be allowed to go by the boards. Surely there are enough red-blooded men and women connected with pic-

and who can be misled readily by his oily protestations of

Artists, Writers, Directors, Producers and Technicians

need advertise only in The Film Spectator to reach all those whom they wish to reach. Phone HE 2801 for our advertising man. tures to see that it is presented to the proper authorities in an effort to draw the teeth of the vicious Hays organization.

Bill Seiter Has Another Good One

HANKS for Thanks for the Buggy Ride. It is a delightful little comedy, splendidly directed by William A. Seiter, and admirably acted by his wife, Laura La Plante, ably assisted by Glenn Tryon, David Rollins and Richard Tucker. The idea of the thing is clever. It pretends that it is the story of the writing of the popular song and the manner in which it was launched. This establishes the bumpy tune as the musical theme of the picture. Tryon is presented as the composer, and Laura as the girl, in love with him, who puts the song over. The successful manner in which the idea is handled suggests an endless array of similar subjects out of which entertaining comedies could be written. Laura La Plante is a decidedly clever girl. There is a wholesomeness about her that makes her delightful to look at, and she has the faculty of putting into her work a quality that keeps you giggling or in a constant state of expecting to giggle. I can not recall having seen her in a great moment, nor can I remember having seen her in a dull one. There are few girls on the screen to which the adjective delightful can be applied more appropriately. There is another adjective delicious-that can be applied to many of her bits in this picture. Bill, the husband, is happiest when he has a story of this sort to direct. He has a subtle sense of humor and is able to express it with a light touch that appeals to



people of intelligence as well as to those who don't think much after they leave the box-office. I will now, with your permission, introduce to you David Rollins. He is a boy, I imagine still in his teens, who, before long will be playing leads opposite some of our biggest younger stars, and who will play the devil with the hearts of young things all over the world. I never saw him before, but saw quite enough of him in Thanks for the Buggy Ride to convince me that he is another Jack Mulhall who started earlier. He is one of those all-American boys whom you love, good looking, well built, and with a twinkle in his eye and a grin on his face that no doubt make him a plague to his mother when he feels like getting a rise out of her. He is free and easy in front of a camera as if he had been on the screen for years. And-this is important-he can wear clothes. Put him down as someone to watch. Glenn Tryon is coming along rapidly. He is as delightful in a masculine way as Laura is in hers. His comedy sense sprouted in the two-reeler hot house, and he has brought from it the things he should remember and left behind those he should forget. Richard Tucker appears in this picture in a role which he handles in his usual finished manner. He also has a well developed comedy vein. One of the features that make the picture a smooth production is wise casting in small parts and Harry Todd, whom I can't remember having seen before, appears in one sequence only. It is enough to stamp him as an excellent actor, one entirely free from any suggestion of acting. Tom Reed's titles have considerable to do with making the picture a good one. It is the sort of story that would tempt one to write wise-cracking titles, a temptation which Tom resists without sacrificing humor. Joe Poland is to be congratulated upon having supervised another sparkling comedy.

Tastes of English Picture Viewers

HIRTY thousand English people, a cross section of the public which supports pictures over there, answered questions sent out by a man who has a string of cinema houses in London. My opinion that cinema patrons are pretty much the same all over the world is strengthened by one feature that an analysis of the answers bring to light, a feature, incidentally, that bears out a statement that I have written quite often, that viewing pictures is a habit not altogether influenced by the pictures themselves. In answer to the question, "Why do you go to the cinema?" the majority of English people answered that they went because it was their habit. I think we are safe in assuming that a digest of replies received from as many as thirty thousand people, carefully selected to represent all walks of life, gives us an accurate estimate of the inclinations of a whole people. And lacking such a survey in this country, we can study the results accomplished by the English exhibitor and apply them to our own country as suits our fancy. The first fact established, in my opinion, reflects the condition in the United States. No matter how poor a picture is, it will do a certain amount of business which the producer accepts as indicating the public taste, while in reality it does nothing of the sort, being rather an indication of how deep rooted the motion picture habit is. The star stands next on the list, and in turn come music, story, stage attrac-

tions, courtesy and service of staff, price of admission, and producer, and at the foot of the list comes publicity, which will distress Arch Reeve, Pete Smith, and the other chaps who write it. If what the English expression reveals applies with equal force to this country, the Federal Trade Commission is moving in the right direction when it tries to force our producers to tell the truth about their pictures. Distressing to me is the revelation that English picture patrons pay little attention to what the critics say. My ego refuses to let me believe that the same condition exists over here. The favorite female star is Betty Balfour, an English girl, and, in order, come Constance Talmadge, Laura La Plante, Norma Talmadge, Mary Pickford, Pola Negri, Gloria Swanson, Lois Moran and Corinne Griffith. These selections were made by the total vote of the male and female patrons. The male patrons alone placed their favorites in this order: Betty Balfour, Constance Talmadge, Laura La Plante, Norma Talmadge, Mary Pickford and Pola Negri, while the female patrons expressed their choice this way: Betty Balfour, Constance Talmadge, Pauline Frederick, Gloria Swanson, Norma Talmadge, and Pola Negri. The total vote on male stars places Ronald Colman at the head of the list. The preferences of the male patrons came in this order: Adolphe Menjou, Ronald Colman, Harold Lloyd, Reginald Denny, Matheson Lang, John Barrymore. The female patrons made their selections this way: Ivor Novello, Ronald Colman, Ramon Novarro, Matheson Lang, Harold Lloyd, Milton Sills. The vote of the intelligentsia of England was segregated, and it will soothe the feelings of Charlie Chaplin and Doug Fairbanks to learn that they are the overwhelming choices of intellectual Britons, with Ronald Colman and Harold Lloyd not so far from them. The vote revealed that directors, writers and technicians do not interest the public. An interesting fact that reveals how picture patrons roam around in their search for screen entertainment is that no picture in which Laura La Plante was featured had been shown in any of the houses in which the vote was taken, yet she stands third on the list of favorite female stars. The exhibitor who distributed the questionnaires has given Universal a blanket order for every one of Laura's pictures. There is another page of these interesting figures, but Lord Roberts, my huge Orange Persian cat, is asleep on it, and I do not like to disturb him. I've had him for eight years, and he is an aristocratic old gentleman, somewhat given to taking liberties with me.

Splendid Picture Made by Universal

NLESS I miss my guess, The Symphony, a picture that Paul Kohner's production unit at Universal has ready for release, is going to be something near the sensational class as a success. It is so natural that it is not going to get full credit for being as good as it is, and I think it is better than anyone connected with its making thought it was going to be. In fact, I don't think anyone on the Universal lot is as enthusiastic about it as I am. At that, I may be a bit over enthusiastic. It is exactly the kind of picture I like, which may color my consideration of it; and, for another thing, it was the next picture I saw after viewing The Legs of Carmen, for which it is a delightful antidote, and in comparison with which almost anything on the screen would have its merits exag-

erated. Until I saw The Symphony I still could smell the Raoul Walsh production, and my stomach had not recovered from Victor McLaglen's beastly exhibitions of eating, but I came out of the Universal projection room with a nice taste in my mouth and renewed faith in the dignity of the screen. Svend Gade wrote the story of The Symphony, Charles Kenyon adapted it to the screen, Harmon Weight directed, and Paul Kohner supervised the production. The picture deserves so much praise that there is enough to be divided among the four. You may add to what they contributed, what I am confident will be considered the finest performance that Jean Hersholt ever gave, which means that in every way it is a magnificent exhibition of intelligent acting. Intelligent also is the film editing of Edward Cahn. There is no heavy in the picture. The menace is the disappointment that Jean Hersholt experiences when he tries to dispose of a symphony he wrote in his home in Europe and which he brings to this country in the hope of gaining recognition for it. I can remember no other picture built on a musical theme as this one is. The love of music being a practically universal attribute, the theme of The Symphony should have box-office value. It is a simple story. After years of struggling until he reaches the verge of poverty, Hersholt hears his symphony played, and honors are heaped upon him. That is all there is to it, but it is done so well that the story becomes great. It is human, a quality that is so rare on the screen that it is a refreshing novelty. From a purely picture standpoint the production has in it almost everything for which I have been hollering my head off. There are few close-ups, and every one that is cut in is necessary. There is not an instance of unintelligent grouping. Hersholt is the star, but the director placed him naturally in groups, and was not afraid to photograph his back. At a social function the camera follows Jean as he walks through the rooms, but gives the impression of paying no more attention to him than to any of the other guests. It is treatment based on the assumption that as the audience knows who the star is, and why he is there, there is no need to make him look more important than anyone else. Groups do not open to let Jean through, which is almost invariably the treatment accorded a star; and people pass between him and the camera. There are many nice little touches. It is necessary that Marian Nixon should know that her father is crying gently, with his back to her. She comes up behind him playfully and puts her hands over his eyes, thus discovering his tears. In another scene she is in a hurry to telephone. She goes to a pay phone, finds she has no money, and turns to Roscoe Kearns, who gives her a nickle. It is done quickly in a long shot, but it gets over

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as one of the many little touches that makes the picture so convincing. There is a sequence in a night club showing the great musician reduced to leading a jazz orchestra which is so bad that the patrons bombard the players with vegetables previously distributed for the purpose. Later, one of the big scenes in the picture takes place on the same set. With a clever use of quick cuts the previous sequence practically is repeated to establish the fact that it is the regular routine of the place. The cuts give the impression that the whole thing is being done over again, but it is not tiresome repetition.

Jean Hersholt in Great Performance

HIS season we are being treated to some fine characterizations. Producers seem to be realizing what I have urged since the beginning of The Spectator, that there is a market for acting. No finer characterization has been given us than Jean Hersholt's as the composer in The Symphony. He makes it distinctly human without making it maudlin. He makes a distinct bid for sympathy, but the appeal is shaded so nicely that no effort is apparent. The impression we get is that the composer is a great artist, impractical and helpless as we conceive such artists to be, and we are satisfied that his symphony is as great as he thinks it is, although we have no way of knowing how much merit there may be in it. In an effort to shake Jean out of the mental stupor caused by his series of disappointments, he is taken to the Hollywood Bowl, not so designated by a title as the locale of the picture is New York, and the Bowl orchestra plays the symphony, action that the story builds to logically and without any straining. In one of the few close-ups in the picture we see Jean beginning to comprehend that it is his composition that he is listening to, and then we watch the dawning of the full realization of the fact. It is a masterly bit of acting. It is a long close-up, and one of the most compelling that I have seen. No one but a really great actor could make it so convincing. Jean leaves his place in the audience, walks down the aisle and mounts the stage, where Alfred Hertz yields him the baton, and it was through tears that I watched the great composer complete the conducting of his own work. The scene was directed splendidly. It offered an inviting opportunity for resorting to melodramatic treatment, but that evil was avoided. Hersholt puts intense feeling into it, but does no ranting. His whole characterization is balanced nicely between too much repression and too obvious histrionics. It is a characterization that probably will not bring Jean all the credit it should, for the picture itself is too smooth in its development and too free from the spectacular to excite the public into doing it justice, and the performance is so human and the character so self-effacing that it will be taken for granted by the majority of those who see the film. Marian Nixon, whom I several times have proclaimed to be on my selected list of favorites, is charming in The Symphony when charm is all we look for, and impressive in the bigger scenes that give her some opportunity to act. George Lewis is the boy. He does not have a great deal to do, but is quite acceptable. A performance that impressed me is given by Roscoe Kearns, whom I have seen in a lot of bits, but never before in a part that offered him a chance for a definite characterization. He is splendid as a more or less lowbrow vaudeville agent who loves Marian, but realizes that her love is not for him. He reveals a thorough understanding of the part, which is one that so easily could have been spoiled. Producers should give this young man more such opportunities. Charles Clary gives one of his usual meritorious performances. I have seen him in so many small parts and never in a big one, and have arrived at the conclusion that he and I must be the only two people in Hollywood who know what a good actor he is. No list of the real actors in The Symphony would be complete if it did not include the name of Alfred Hertz. Many times I have sat in the Bowl and drunk in the notes which his baton waved to me from his hundred instruments; I have listened to his glorious music that swelled beyond me to the hills that sleep beyond the Bowl, but not even the moon that looked down upon me, nor the starts that bejewelled the moon's domain, bewitched me into imagining him to be a movie actor. It was a clever idea to include him in the cast, and right cleverly does he prove it so. Also it was a clever idea to use the Bowl itself. It is not often that we see thirty thousand unpaid extras in one picture. I don't know how The Symphony will fare with the public. But if it does not do well it will be a reflection on the public, and not on the picture. To me it is a great piece of screen work, entertaining, clean, human and appealing. Paul Kohner, who supervised it, deserves a large share of the credit for its many excellencies, for they tell me that he was on the set for every shot and nursed it carefully until it left the cutting-room. Sometimes the supervisor system works.

Rambling Musings on an Opening Night

OME months ago I saw Two Arabian Nights in preview, and wrote about it then. I liked it very much, but criticized Johnnie Considine, its producer, for including in an otherwise clean and entertaining film some coarse humor that was more coarse than humorous. I went to the opening of the picture at the ostentatiously named Million Dollar Theatre, and had a very good time. The first impression that I received was what poor showmen showmen are. The greatest attraction of openings is the crowds that attends. An opening hereabouts brings out more beautiful young women than a similar function could anywhere else in the world—and the people who run the shows have their houses so dark that it is difficult to pick out your friends, and those who buy tickets to see the stars simply can't see them. The beautiful women might just as well be dressed in gingham gowns as in the creations they wear. Johnnie's party was the tenth opening since I started The Spectator for which I bought a new gown for Mrs. Spectator, and on no occasion could anyone see it, and I am good and sore. Sid Grauman will have an opening shortly. I understand I'm going to be stuck for a new gown for it. I want to notify Sid now either to turn his lights up when Mrs. Spectator and I enter his house, or to have an usher meet us at the door with a couple of lanterns. It was so dark at the Million Dollar that I said "Hello, Claire", to a blonde head in front of me, and it wasn't Claire Windsor. But it was Anna Q. Nilsson, so it was all right. Then came the screen entertainment, followed by Jack Barrymore's polished oratory, which I didn't hear until some lowbrow in the gallery made out

loud the speech that I was thinking, and from then on the party was a success until we reached the sidewalk and tried to find our car, as chauffeur for which our houseboy doubles, and for which we pay him extra; then to Henry's, where we had a sandwich with Sid Grauman and a short chat with Charlie Chaplin, picked up a couple of subscriptions, sold Lloyd Nosler an ad, collected an overdue account, and then home and to bed. I was sorry to see that Johnnie had not cut the smut out of his picture. I was squeezed between him and Jack Barrymore as we left the theatre, and I roasted him for leaving it in, the fact that I have known him for twenty-seven of his twenty-nine years giving me the privilege of roasting him when he needs it. "Well, you heard them laugh, didn't you?" he countered. Which is no defence. Some people laughed when the close-up of a girl's drawers was shown in The Legs of Carmen at the Carthay Circle. Downright vulgarity always will get a laugh from people with vulgar minds, but even such people will not cry if there be none of it. Johnnie himself has a clean mind. He is one of the finest young fellows I know, well educated, clean living, and clean thinking. He has been elevated to the position of general manager of production of all United Artists pictures, which makes his thought processes matters of importance to the world. He has an opportunity to carve for himself a notable career, and I know of none that has been built on smut. Suggestiveness on the screen or stage never has made anyone successful permanently. Johnnie has given us a splendid comedy in Two Arabian Nights, one of the best I have seen on the screen, and I am sorry that he feels that it is strengthened by the inclusion of an element that repulses clean minded adults and which we shrink

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Those whose policies I have been called upon to oppose are making it as difficult as possible for The Spectator to continue to exist. They have promised that they will put it out of business, and as far as I know it is the only one of their promises that they are making a diligent effort to keep.

If on The Spectator's paid subscription list there were the names of five thousand exhibitors, the paper would be able to laugh at any efforts to destroy it. Its voice would be heeded, and it would be a valuable friend to you.

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This proposal to the personnel of the industry is made at the suggestion, and upon the advice, of twenty leading screen people, three of whom brought the idea to me, and the rest of whom gave it their earnest support. The first plan was to make a quiet canvass without publicity, but I preferred this method.

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from letting our children see. Of course, there is a market for smut. There is also a market for adultery, dope, and blackjacks, but it is a market that is exploited without publicity. And as Fox and United Artists are both members of the Hays organization which operates on a gentlemen's agreement, it is not very clubby for Johnnie to compete with the gentlemen of the Fox organization in the purveying of filth on the screen. Anyway, Johnnie is a rank amateur at the game compared with Winnie Sheehan and Sol Wurtzel. He will come nearer pleasing us with his pictures if he makes only the kind that will please himself. My advice to him is to let Winnie and Sol do all the wallowing in the mud, and to keep United Artists pictures clean. He will get farther in the long run.

O THE extent that its mission is to entertain, In Old

"In Old Kentucky" Quite Entertaining

Kentucky, which John M. Stahl directed for M.-G.-M., is successful, although it has in it a lot of little things that detract from it. I saw it before it was ready for release and I presume the weaknesses will be eliminated before it reaches the public. It comes from the unit supervised by Bernie Hyman, whom I have accused of being lacking in all the attributes that a well equipped supervisor should have, but he has made a very fair picture out of this one. Stahl's direction plumbs human depths in several places. It is a typical Kentucky melodrama in which the war is introduced effectively. James Murray and Helene Costello are the featured players. Judging by the size of the type in which Murray's name is presented he is an important young man, but I can not remember having seen him before. However, he does very well, and Helene is sweet and pleasing. The finest straight performance is given by that sterling actor, Edward Martindel, in a part that suits him admirably. He and Dorothy Cummings are the parents of Murray, and Miss Cummings gives a feeling interpretation of her part. As I intimated, it is a picture that will not stand searching analysis. Murray is presented in the opening sequences as an upright young fellow. He goes to war and returns pretty much of a rotter, given to drunkenness and gambling. I thought that there would be some explanation of his demoralization, that it would be attributed to shell-shock, or something of the sort. But no such explanation was given. In the end he reforms by the simple process of reforming, thus leaving his cruel treatment of his parents inexcusable, and making him out a pretty sorry hero. Martindel, his fortune depleted by the war, issues a bad check, and an officer who comes to arrest him, says that all he wants is the money. To threaten to arrest a man for the purpose of extracting money from him is, in itself, a crime, and when a warrant is issued it can not be squared by the payment of money, as it is in this picture. Such action by the legal authorities is blackmail. In the closing sequence Martindel is entertaining a party at dinner in his home, which has been planted as representative of the finest traditions of Kentucky, where the conventions are observed. But when Martindel is called to the drawing room to greet a caller all the guests troop in after him to see what is going on. It is an impossible scene. We have to thank this picture for introducing to us an extraordinarily clever comedian, a colored gentleman who rejoices in the fascinating name

of Steppin Fetchit. Mr. Fetchit is superb. In fact he is so good that he adds greatly to the entertainment quality of a picture that he has no business being in. He is solely an added attraction and contributes nothing to the telling of the story. Interpolated comedy generally weakens a picture by interrupting the story, but in this one good old Steppin is so funny that he atones for the technical fault of his presence. He has a teammate in Caroline Snowden, also dusky and clever. Someone could take these two negroes and make them the central characters of a rattling good comedy. Bert Williams never had anything on Steppin Fetchit. I was glad to see in this picture a man whose face I have not seen on the screen for a long time, Winter Hall. I suppose he is one of those dependable Amrican actors who are forced to stand aside to give the foreigners places in casts. The editing of In Old Kentucky could be a lot better. Murray and Miss Costello have two pretty love scenes in a bower made graceful by the drooping branches of weeping willows. In both instances we are given but a brief glimpse of the attractive setting, and then we get big close-ups of the two heads. If any thought had been exercised on the editing close-ups would not have been resorted to. The full pictorial value of the setting would have been retained throughout. Metro has been doing pretty well of late with the punctuation of its titles, but in this picture suffers a serious relapse. There are some weird mistakes.

"Good Time Charley" Might Be Improved

ARNER BROTHERS had a big idea to toy with in Darryl Zanuck's story of Good Time Charley, but they fail to make the most of it. It deals with American theatrical life, and it was given to Michael Curtiz to direct-just why, I dont' know. There are in Hollywood probably fifty experienced American directors who came from the stage and who could have handled the material with conviction and confidence, but the story is handed to a foreigner who reveals in his treatment of it that he is not familiar with the subject. James Young, with a long stage experience and a long list of notable pictures to his credit, can not get a picture to direct, while a story that he could handle ably is given to a foreigner. Jim Young could have put a soul into such a story as Good Time Charley, and the picture's weakness is that it lacks a soul. I do not blame Curtiz. I know him and

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like him, but there is growing within me a conviction that this foreigner business is being carried to an extent that is inexcusable. Curtiz seems to have directed the picture as if he had little interest in it. I saw it before it was put in its final form, and suppose that it has been tightened up since. When I viewed it it dragged in several places and , it took me too long to find out what the story was about. It really is a characterization of an old actor by Warner Oland, who gives his part an interpretation that I do not agree with. Oland is one of the best actors we have, and he gives a masterly interpretation of the part as he conceives it. His opinion is perhaps better than mine, but to me his part is one that essentially calls for a display of obvious histrionics. He plays it practically straight, which is not my conception of an old actor. The story on the whole is unconvincing. Helene Costello, quite a promising and attractive young woman, becomes a great success on the European stage while Oland, her father, blind and impoverished, is an inmate of a home for indigent old actors. The idea is that his daughter would be made unhappy if she knew of his plight, but no stress is laid on the unhappiness he gives her by not letting her know where he is. If ever I become old, poor and blind, either of my daughters will have no difficulty in locating me. She will find me sitting on her front porch. When Oland goes to the charitable institution Clyde Cook, his constant and faithful friend, becomes an inmate also, although he is shown as being in the prime of life and quite able to continue his career as an actor. Helene comes to the home to entertain the inmates and finds Oland and Cook. It would have been better to have had Cook still on the stage, unaware of Oland's whereabouts. He could have accompanied Helene to the home to contribute to the program. More punch would have been given to the scene by having Helene and Cook share in the discovery of Oland. The story is constructed poorly. Oland goes to the office of Montague Love, who plays a standard heavy, for the purpose of seeking revenge for an old wrong. In addition to being handled unconvincingly, the scene is weakened further by the fact that it has nothing to do with the story. Nothing hinges on it and it leads to nothing. There should be no scene in a picture that does not advance the story. But Zanuck, as the author, had a good idea, although I believe that as supervisor he did not realize all its possibilities. It should have been much more human. It did not develop all the pathos that there was in it. One reason for this is the coldness of Oland's characterization and another is the listlessness of the direction. As is the case with all the pictures that come from the Warner Brothers Studio, the titles are punctuated wretchedly. It's "Charley" in the main title and "Charlie" in a spoken title.

This Is How It Could Be Done

Paramount is using only incandescent lights in shooting the Jannings picture now in production. In from six to twelve months such lights will be in use in all the studios. As far as I know, this will mark the only advanced step in making pictures that the industry has taken in a decade. I can see no sign of any revolution in the whole system of production, and yet nothing is so in need of a gigantic revolution. We make pictures now in a way that makes them cost twice what they should, and

renders it almost impossible to realize the possibilities of the stories. But the people who make them are pleased with themselves. If they will permit me, I would like to offer them some suggestions, which, if adopted, should make it possible to produce better pictures more cheaply than the poor ones are made now. First comes a perfect script, one that calls for the exact footage in which the picture is to be released. Despite the belief of producers and supervisors to the contrary, perfect scripts are possible, and will be the rule when competent people prepare them. Next there should be prepared a colored sketch of each set to be used, the sketch showing exactly how it is proposed to dress each set, down to the appearance and location of the smallest ornament. Possibly a number of sketches of each set will have to be made before the set is decided on finally, but it is cheaper to make sketches than it is to discard or alter sets after they are built, as is the present practice. The sketches finally approved would be photographed and each department supplied with copies from which it would work. With the aid of one set of photographs the director would decide exactly how he was to direct each scene, where his various characters would enter, what their movements would be in relation to the furniture, etc., and how they would make their exits. Every shot would be worked out on paper, the camera angles, and the plan of lighting. Each arc and spot would have its place on paper. In this way the director would know the camera limits of each shot, making it unnecessary to build a set or dress it beyond the camera lines. In ensemble scenes the position of each extra before action began would be indicated, thus making it possible to call for the precise number of extras required. While the picture was being shot four or five cameras would be in use. One would take the medium shot, and the others, equipped with telescopic lenses, would take the necessary close-ups when the whole scene was being shot. The grouping would be made to make this possible, with the close-up cameras stationed along the sidelines, so to speak, so as to face directly the characters to be close-uped. This would make it possible to shoot a picture in one quarter the time it takes by the present cumbersome and inefficient system. I am aware that when producers and supervisors began to read the above suggestions they began also to smile broadly, and that by the time they finished reading the preceeding two sentences they were laughing loudly and calling me insane. As a matter of fact, these suggestions are not mine at all. Everyone of them has been used successfully in Europe. I have gone over carefully the com-



plete plan of a production put on paper exactly as I have sketched it above. Several pictures have been made by the method, and all of them should be. The man who showed me the plan, and who has made pictures under it, is Julio Serrador, a distinguished Peruvian, who has been identified with pictures in Europe for over twenty-five years. For twenty months he has been in Hollywood quietly studying our screen methods and acquainting himself with American requirements. He can talk more intelligently about making pictures than any other man I know. He is not looking for a job, but if either Metro or Paramount could sign him up for a salary of a million or so a year it would be a good business stroke. A few hours conversation with him would be worth many thousands of dollars to any studio. But Hollywood won't gain anything from Serrador's presence here. As I have said, the people who make our pictures are pleased with themselves.

Proof That Public Doesn't Want Dirt

THEN The King of Kings opened at Sid Grauman's Chinese Theatre "Variety" predicted that it would run for eighteen months. With a humility engendered by the importance in the amusement world of my contemporary, and by the youth and inexperience of The Spectator, I ventured in these pages the opinion that six months would be the extreme limit of the run of the big De Mille picture. It closes after a run of five and three quarter months, or twenty-four weeks. "Variety" no doubt based its opinion on the elaborateness of the production and the importance of the theme. I based mine on the treatment of the theme, arguing that it should have been a simple picture, not such an elaborate one. The run of the De Mille picture at the Chinese was one week longer than that of Seventh Heaven at the Carthay Circle. The longest run of any picture in Los Angeles was that of The Covered Wagon, which lasted at the Egyptian for thirtyfour weeks, four weeks longer than the run of Ten Commandments. The Big Parade, a picture that was rated as better than either The Covered Wagon or Ten Commandments, had a run of twenty-seven weeks. The fourth longest run at the Egyptian was that of the picture that opened it, Robin Hood, which lasted twenty-five weeks. Doug Fairbanks and Charlie Chaplin divided the honors of the next longest run, The Thief of Bagdad and The Gold Rush each holding the screen for twenty weeks. Next came The Iron Horse with a record of seventeen weeks, and Old Ironsides followed with fifteen. Sparrows and The Black Pirate remained as the joint bill at the Egyptian for

EDWARD KAHN

FILM EDITOR
"THE SYMPHONY"
FOR UNIVERSAL

fourteen weeks. You will notice that all the pictures that enjoyed long runs at Hollywood's principal house were lacking in that quality that producers maintain a picture must have to gain old age-sex appeal. But now we come to one such, Don Juan, which was all sex appeal and no art. When it opened the champions of heaving bosoms and clinging lips predicted that it would run a year, and The Spectator was alone in predicting that its career at the Egyptian would be brief. Despite the glamor of the Barrymore name and the showmanship of Sid Grauman, plus the nightly exhortations of the Warner radio, just enough life was pumped into Don Juan to string it out into a run of thirteen weeks. Romola, ten weeks, and The Better 'Ole, nine weeks, both pictures that Sid used as a last resort because there was nothing better available, were the only ones whose runs that of the Barrymore necking opus exceeded. I do not count Topsy and Eva, an atrocious thing which sputtered and went out after Sid Grauman disposed of the house. The history of the Egyptian while it was a long run house can be studied with profit to the industry. The majority of producers can not be convinced that the public is not pining for the passion of a Don Juan and the degeneracy of a Legs of Carmen. They will learn nothing from the fact that the only picture of that sort that was shown at the Egyptian from October, 1922, to May, 1927, held up for a shorter time than any other pretentious production that Sid Grauman presented. I grant that there is a considerable portion of the public that likes to wallow in filth, but I have maintained consistently from the inception of The Spectator that the proportion of this part of the whole is so small that it is the greatest economic folly to cater to it. For the same amount of money that Raoul Walsh spent on his disgusting Carmen atrocity another Seventh Heaven could be produced, and it would make ten times the money that the Walsh picture will

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make. But Winnie Sheehan, that master showman, who knows the tastes of you and me better than we do ourselves, believes that women's drawers and hoggish eating make up the kind of screen entertainment that appeals to us. It might profit him to study the history of Grauman's Egyptian.

The White Lie is a two-reeler, a short bit of reassurance that there is no need for us to worry about the future of screen art. We have picture brains in Hollywood and ultimately they will be allowed to express themselves. Guido Orlando is one of the people with brains. He is quite young, considerably under thirty, I should imagine, and has something within him that demands expression on the screen. The White Lie is his first effort. I never saw a better short subject. It is just a glimpse at an individual sorrow caused by the war, and contains a thoughtfully conceived and cleverly executed sequence in which an old man, well played by Spottiswoode Aitken, explains to his grandchild (Freddie Frederick, a very clever youngster) what caused the war. It is the "white lie" which justifies the title. Orlando wrote and directed the little story. It is the first of a series which he intends to produce. Usually first efforts are improved upon in subsequent trials. I don't see how Orlando can expect to give us anything better than his first, but, if he does so, we may anticipate a series composed entirely of masterpieces.

Louella Parsons asks in the Examiner what would happen if American producers, by way of reprisal for the agitation in Europe against American films, sent all our foreign actors and directors back to the countries that they came from. This would happen: the actors and directors would make in their own countries pictures that would crowd American pictures off foreign screens more completely. Producers brought the foreigners to Hollywood for the double purpose of forcing down salaries of Americans and to keep the foreigners from making good pictures in their own countries. There is only one way for our producers to silence foreign agitation, and that way is to make pictures that the foreigners will like. To suggest that the interests of American films would be served by turning loose well trained artists to compete with them is ridiculous.

Lon Chaney has great box-office value. He is not as handsome as Ramon Novarro, and lacks the sex appeal of Jack Gilbert. His sole attraction is the quality of his acting. It bears out my contention that the public craves acting, or what it mistakes for it. The screen generally has learned nothing from Chaney's popularity. It always is looking for more pretty boys, and refuses to recognize the box-office value of acting. Metro is overlooking one of the best bets in pictures. It has on its pay-roll Lionel Barrymore, a magnificent actor whom it uses only in insignificant parts. I believe he could top Chaney at the box-

I dug up the interesting fact the other day that the longest close-up on record is one of Charlie Ray. In one of his pictures of a few years ago he is shown shaving himself for the first time. The close-up runs for three hundred and seventy-five feet. I do not believe that there is another actor in the business who can maintain a closeup for so long a time. Lewis Milestone tells me that Charlie is giving a fine performance in Corinne Griffith's Garden of Eden.

The Fox people and Fred Miller expect The Legs of Carmen to have a three months' run at the Carthay Circle. My guess is that it will last six weeks, then a few days will be spent in giving the house a thorough fumigation, and Sunrise will settle down to a long run.

I don't like to butt in on matters that are purely personal, but after viewing The Legs of Carmen I would like to suggest to the Fox people that they should feed Victor McLaglen more between pictures.

Met Mitch Lewis on the street the other day. Splendid actor. American. Hasn't had a call for a long time. Advised him to change his name to Mitchovic Lewisofski. Sure to get work then at United Artists or Universal.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By DONALD BEATON - The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

ICHARD DIX is a clever actor A and has a good personal his pictures, using Shanghai and has a good personality, but Bound as a criterion, are certainly rather punk. As usual, he was the big, two-fisted hero who defeated great gangs of Chinese bandits singlehanded. He always used his fists instead of bothering with anything so childish as a gun. In one place, his ship was boarded by bandits. Instead of getting a gun and shooting them, he ran to the bow of the boat and fought them as they came aboard. Another time he came up behind two bandits sitting on the framework of the pad-dle-wheel. Instead of pushing them off, which could have been easily accomplished, he grabbed them by their necks and dove off with them. After that there was a lot of silly stuff in the water. Dix, unarmed, fought off

about twenty bandits, who had knives; then he grabbed a rope which happened opportunely to be hanging from the stern of the boat and did a little aquaplaning.

The heavy in Shanghai Bound was typically moving picture. He started to pick on the hero for no reason at all the first time he saw him. He spent his time in sneering at everything and making silly statements about his own importance. No human being as low as he was supposed to be would have been allowed to grow up. Dix was supposed to be chief of intelligence in the Asiatic division. Yet when the story opened, he was captain of a dirty little river steamboat. The man who rowed the boat didn't even know who was captain of it. He certainly would have known about it if, for military reasons, a naval officer was commanding one of its boats. The picture was silly like that all the way through.

DUPERT JULIAN has made a very good picture out of The Country Doctor. The whole production was plausible and there was nothing in it which couldn't happen. Rudolph Schildkraut in the title role gave a masterly performance, and a new face to me, Jane Keckley, gave an exhibition of acting which proves that she is one of the finest character actresses on the screen. The whole cast was very strong, Sam De Grasse and Junior Coghlan standing out. Young Coghlan is unusually clever. Virginia Bradford has possibilities, but Frank Marion didn't impress me much.

The only weak points in the picture were where typical moving picture stuff was inserted. Some of the scenes were too "stagey" as all the characters looked at the camera instead of

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where they should have. Also, several scenes were so long and drawn out that the suspense was all lost. The fire, which was apparently inserted only as another bit of production, was useless and weakened the picture. The boy was lying within a few feet of the raging fire, yet a pile of snow on his chest was unmelted. The scene where the tree fell on the boy was poorly done, as he walked back into it after he had saved Junior from being smashed by it. That was a hard scene to take, however, as one can hardly expect an actor to get smashed for his art. We could stand a lot more like The Country Doctor.

ONALD COLMAN is a very R agreeable surprise in The Magic Flame. He has two parts, heavy and hero, and he performs very well in both of them. I hardly knew him as the heavy, although the only difference in his make-up was the uptilting of the corners of his mustache. His whole face was changed and his expression was different than it usually is. All in all, it was a very good performance. Vilma Banky gave her usual good performance, but due to the fact that Colman had twice as many scenes as she did, his performance was outstanding. I was very glad to see Gustav von Seyffertitz again. His acting was perfect, as usual. The first part of the picture was cut badly or something, as it was hard to follow because of the jerkiness of the action. The only fault that I had to find with the picture was that the heavy got to kill so many people without anyone questioning him. It seems funny that even a man who was as high of rank as he was did not have to answer some questions about all the dead men lying around his apartment. Otherwise, the picture was very good and did not contain any faults that were of much importatnee. Photographically speaking, The Magic Flame was a work of art. The photography was splendid as Goldwyn's pictures usually are.

HE Angel of Broadway is a good picture, but as an argument for religion, it misses fire somewhat. The girl defied religion, yet nothing much happened to her. Clever touches abounded throughout the picture, and the direction was very good. It took quite a while to get started, but it went fine when it did get going. Good acting featured the picture all the way through, and Leatrice Joy gave a better performance than I have ever seen her give before. Jane Keckley, who did so well in The Country Doctor, was also in this, but she had a part which was too small to do her talents justice. Victor Varconi was good as the leading man. Elise Bartlett gave a fine performance. John W. Kraft's titles were fine and featured the picture. In one of the opening sequences, characters were brought out by running the camera along the group assembled to listen to the Salvation Army workers. That was good stuff, but when the

camera came to the main characters it paused longer than usual. That detracted greatly from the effect. Leatrice Joy put on a Salvation Army act at the night club. The whole act was shot, but if only a little of it had been shown, it wouldn't have been seen how poor it was. In a big scene between Miss Joy and Varconi, the two were shown together and there were no close-ups. That was a good thing and contributed to the drama. The Angel of Broadway is a very acceptable picture.

PICTURE ten years old is interesting to see, so I was very much interested in M'liss, a tenyear-old picture of Mary Pickford's, which I saw in a projection room. The picture was made as a burlesque on Westerns, but it began to get serious and eventually only the titles gave any hint of humor. For a picture that was ten years old, it was very advanced in motion picture art. The lighting and photography were as good as most today, and some of the shots were really beautiful. The cast was an interesting commentary on how queerly and quickly motion picture actors go from the bottom to the top. Only three of the cast are still at the top. Three have quit pictures, one went from the bottom to the top and back again, and one is just where he was ten years ago.

OSEF VON STERNBERG is a very versatile director. The first picture of his I saw was the mud and gloom epic, The Salvation Hunters. The next was a very good character study, The Woman of the Sea. The fact that he was a brilliant director was made plain when he directed The Exquisite Sinner. After showing his ability in these varied lines, he has made a splendid melodrama, Under-world. This picture is a story of the gangsters and their activities, but there is a lot more to it than just that. Von Sternberg has a genius for characterizing, and every member of the cast of Underworld was a distinct character. That is one of the reasons why Underworld stands out as more than just a mere melodrama. This is about the first picture Von Sternberg has made which will be a box-office hit. Underworld has added a new name to the list of motion picture great, that of George Bancroft. The work he did in this picture should put him among the finest actors on the screen. I see that he is going to be starred. If that is correct, then his case is just another example which proves that a man doesn't have to be a young Adonis to get ahead on the screen. Clive Brook did well in the first part of the picture as a drunken man, but

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when he got dressed up and clean he got too stiff. Evelyn Brent did well as Bancroft's lady friend. The battles between the gangsters and the police were very good stuff.

LETTERS

TITLE PUNCTUATION

My dear Mr. Beaton:

Many times, in your wonderfully valuable magazine, you have discoursed at considerable length on the subject of punctuation of motion picture titles. I fancy that there is nothing else in the world which so annoys you as an improperly punctuated sentence.

In the main, I am in perfect agreement with your attitude. I have no thought of countenancing illiteracy. Glaring faults in punctuation—offenses which are simply mistakes and nothing more, such as the failure to insert a comma at a point where it is plainly called for—are an annoyance to the average theatregoer, and intrude a jarring note into what should be the smooth flow of pictured action.

But in the photoplay we are dealing with a new and different mode of expression, and it seems to me that there is often sufficient justification for departing from established forms if this will be of assistance in the telling of a story to the best advantage. One cannot put inflection into a printed title, and there arises the necessity of conveying by artificial means the spirit and feeling behind the spoken words.

Thus, dashes are often used on the screen to separate the words or parts of a sentence, to denote, perhaps, that the sentence is spoken haltingly. Or is may be that a dash or two will render the title more easily readable, and assist the audience in grasping the meaning of the phrases at once.

Similarly, a sentence which is uncompleted in a single title will be fol-

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For eleven years he has been satisfying Hollywood people who have good taste in clothes.

1765½ Cahuenga Hollywood lowed by dashes, and its continuation in the next title is preceded by dashes. Though there may exist no justification for this in books of grammar, it is surely permissable as a means of allowing an opportunity to show the reaction of a character to the words which have been spoken, or to produce a desired reaction in the minds of the audience.

A narrative title may be followed by a number of dots, to hold the caption in the minds of spectators and to cause them to carry the words in their consciousness over into the scene which follows.

Often, it seems, a period in a title does not produce a sufficiently apparent stop, and the mind of the spectator entirely skips the punctuation mark. To grasp the sense of the title, then, a second reading is necessary. The words (and the thoughts engendered by them) are "too close together", and for screen purposes often seem to be divided to better advantage, by the use of a dash or dashes.

Dwinelle Benthall, who collaborates with me in the writing of titles, was formerly a teacher of English at the Woman's College in Richmond, Va., and I feel that in her, at least, our "team" has an effective check on punctuation. Yet we do not always adhere exactly to the rules laid down in the count half.

in the copy books.

We believe, in short, that while the punctuation of film titles should undoubtedly be correct in its fundamentals, the title writer should not be too firmly bound by established usage, but should have due regard for the requirements of the medium through which he is assisting in telling a story.

RUFUS McCOSH.

IN JUSTICE

Dear Mr Beaton:

Of Hollywood wild parties, of scandals, of fights, of notorious divorces, of murders, all accredited to film folk, we hear and read overmuch. Indeed it would seem as if the newspapers searched like ghouls for some new glittering crime to check up against the movies. But of shining acts that might be recorded by the angels in heaven, of sublime and unselfish deeds of the noblest kind of charity, we hear and read mighty little. Let us merely glance at two cases that came up last week.

First. The case of a young girl of nineteen years of age—just a film "extra". Never got beyond playing in the background—in fine, a poor little movie moth whose aspirations were larger than her strength or ability. Casting directors, with an eye to "types" and beauty, sometimes picked her out and would say: "Get a little meat on your bones, and we can do something for you then." You see the little extra girl was appallingly thin. Or the casting director would say: "Pep up a bit, kid. Those big eyes of yours are too sad. You look as if you were carrying the weight of the world upon your shoulders." Perhaps she was.

She suspected what was the matter with her, but she was afraid to tell her mother, a worker like herself. Then one day, when she had dropped in a sad litle heap, the doctor, hastily summoned, explained to the mother that the little girl had tuberculosis. There was a fighting chance for her—if she could be given proper rest and care. If not—well, the doctor would not predict how long she might last. It was a case of a young life at stake. Sanitariums cost money to go to, and the little family had in a measure been partly dependent on the girl's slender

In this tragic emergency came Edmund Goulding, Metro Goldwyn Mayer director. Someone—a mutual friend I believe—told him about the little girl extra. She was a total stranger to him. He had never met nor even seen the child. She had played in none of his pictures. He was not, up till then, even aware of her existence. Yet this is what he did, with scarcely a moment's hesitation. First he arranged with a well known sanitarium to take care of the girl at his personal expense. He then put himself out to obtain for her mother a position. He said to certain associates: "A few dollars will only tide them over for a while. The girl needs medical treatment and care and rest; the mother must have work."

Here was an argument above mere charity. When the mother, greatly moved, said to his secretary: "I didn't know there were people like this in the world," she replied. "That's nothing. He's taking care of a dozen people. One girl was at a sanitarium for over a year and Mr. Goulding paid for it all."

Number two case. The same week that Edmund Goulding sent the little extra girl to a sanitarium, Louis B. Mayer, of whom, by the way, you have had some harsh things to say, was sending a check, ractically anonymously, since it was sent through a third party, to a certain writer who

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was in sore financial straits. Harry Rapf, appealed to by the way by this same Edmund Goulding, made a place for the writer and put her immediatedly to work—something she needed even more than financial help. Dorothy Farnum, Josephine Lovett (Mrs. John Robertson), Francis Marion, Agnes Christine Johnson, Florence Ryerson, not only tendered financial aid, but gave the more valuable support of their sympathy and encouragement. Mrs. Cummings, mother of Ruth Cummings, title writer, and sister of Louis B. Mayer, went out of her way to do everything in her power to reinstate this writer. She even braved the possible irritation of her brother, by pluckily going to the front to secure an immediate position for her.

These are the kind of acts that we do not read about in the newspapers. If the papers recorded acts such as these it would take the bad taste out of our mouths of the stories concerning the so called wild parties and other notorious acts with which our jour-

nals teem.

Now Mr. Beaton, you have pilloried several people who perhaps deserve it. Give space now for those who have done good deeds. They are a credit to this much abused industry. I dare say several volumes could be written of acts of kindness and charity similar to the ones mentioned above.

ONE WHO STOOD BY.

UNDERWORLD

Dear Mr. Beaton:

As Von Sternberg is one of the apostles of modern realism, one nat-

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FILM EDITOR

WITH UNIVERSAL

TAY GARNETT
Writer

DE MILLE STUDIO

Demmy Lamson, Manager Ruth Collier and W. O. Christensen, Associates

I only know that

AL COHN

is in New York. Winter is coming — and there is Hollywood!

Don't you agree with me?

CHARLES KENYON

SCENARIST

HERRIN

UNIVERSAL

DANIEL G. TOMLINSON

WRITER

OXford 4536

PAUL SCHOFIELD

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TITLES by

DWINELLE BENTHALL

and RUFUS McCOSH

228 MARKHAM BLDG. HOLLYWOOD JOHN FARROW

WRITER

DE MILLE STUDIO

B

urally looks for realism in his work. Looking at Underworld, one finds realism that fails to convince on account of errors of reality.

Taking "realism" to mean the depiction of things as they actually exist, without any subordination to the exigencies of the camera or dramatic or pictorial effect, it would seem that if this condition of actual truth to facts is missing in any detail of any importance whatever, the claim for realism, as a whole, must fall to the ground.

Pausing to remark, en passant, that had Red Mulligan been introduced as Rudy Mullini, say, we could better have associated him with the part he is called on to play, and with the way in which he played it. Both his profession and facial contortions are Latin rather than Hibernian.

To take up the main issue.—Judging by the introduction of machine guns and other details, the play is one of the present day. To judge by the details disclosed by the prison sequence we would conclude that it deals with conditions "befo' de Wah".

In all modern prisons, the Death Watch consists of two persons. No modern prison has cells—condemned or otherwise—having windows opening on the outer world. Neither do they have gratings through which the prisoner can put his hand, much less his whole arm. While we do not speak from precise knowledge in this instance, we do not believe that a guard would play checkers with a condemned prisoner while in a position to be seized and held by that prisoner. The fact that he should have keys on his person with which the prisoner can free himself is so improbable as to be ludicrous.

To carry it further; while many indulgences are granted to a condemned prisoner on the eve of his execution, it is quite beyond probability that he would be furnished with a meal supplied by a shady underworld cafe. Self destruction is a favorite way out with criminals of the Bull Weed type and is fully guarded against by the authorities. In any case, the bearer would have been relieved of his tray, which would have been carried to the prisoner by a trusty or other prison attendant under the close inspection of the guard. We are told in a title that Bull is held strictly incommunicado, but it does not look much like it in this scene.

The whole prison sequence is filled with glaring errors, both of fact and reason, so glaring in fact that one does not have to be either a jail bird or a logician to spot them. They are entirely due to the causes that allow similar errors to creep into 95 per cent of the pictures—failure to obtain correct data, and the lack of logical minds.

Errors of fact are absolutely inexcusable. Errors of reason, unfortunately, are not so easily to be avoided, for a logical mind is a gift rather than an acquisition, and is a rarity among artists, who refuse to be trammeled by such trifles as logic and ratiocination.

To illustrate the latter point: Is it reasonable to suppose that the police would waste ammunition by subjecting a room to a hail of bullets, fired at such as acute angle of elevation that three people can move unharmed about the room so long as they keep away from one window? Would they not rather raise the elevation of the guns themselves, so that they could rake the room with a horizontal fire?

The picture lacks nothing in entertainment and thrill, and boasts at least two good characterizations, but one is forced to the conclusion that what evident merit it has, would have been enhanced by the elimination of these silly and entirely unnecessary discrepancies.

F. ELY PAGET.

NEW YORK

Dear Mr. Beaton:

In a recent issue of the Spectator I read the statement that the moronic rating frequently applied to motion picture audiences is a myth. Until this evening I was inclined to the same opinion. This evening I was treated to a nerve exhausting experience by one such audience.

Having no idea what I was to see, I attended a preview on Hollywood Boulevard. The feature picture was Man Power, some conventionally inane celluloid which managed to build to a satisfactory suspense in the final reel. At any rate the audience seemed satisfied. In addition there was a Charley Chase comedy and another picture which I did not see, entitled, Wanted—A Coward. I did not stay because I had just witnessed the preview and felt that what was most wanted was some of the dynamite used so subtitularly in Man Power. At any rate, the audience received a more than adequate ration of celluloid for their forty cents and there should have been no complaint on that score.

This preview was the most thrilling, fascinating and generally beautiful picture I have ever been privileged to witness. It was received with more rudeness and derision than I have ever known in a picture theatre.

The picture was Robert O'Flaherty's New York. I felt awed at the thought that I was a human being like one of those who created the organism portrayed in this film. I felt honored in being permitted to see the vivid, emotionally caressing and imaginatively compelling picture Mr. O'Flaherty has fused from the elements of our metropolitan world. I felt that in comparison Metropolis suggested a homo-sexuals' adventure with a superior magic lantern and poorly remembered H. G. Wells.

The boulevard audience felt somewhat differently. It behaved as though it were watching a bum prize fight. They actually gave the picture what is known on the sporting page as the "Bronx cheer", and clamored for its removal from the screen.

The question which so sorely puzzles me is: how the humans, whose

energies resulted in the structural pageant portrayed in this picture, can be so utterly blind to the strangely stirring beauty Mr. O'Flaherty has revealed.

I fear I have, by the apparent excessiveness of my attitude, defeated my own protest, but my emotions are largely dictated by a fear that this film will have to wait many years before it achieves a general release.

Sincerely hoping you were at the Mar Cal that evening, I remain,
Yours, ROBERT HORWOOD.

Sue Carol of Soft Cushions is worthy of something very much better. Harem stuff is not her style. She's too young.



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STARS	STARS Per cent.
CHAS. CHAPLIN100	NORMA TALMADGE 87
DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS100	Greta Garbo 86
HAROLD LLOYD	Lillian Gish
John Barrymore	Colleen Moore 84
Lon Chaney 92 John Gilbert 86	Mary Pickford 81 Marion Davies 80
Ronald Colman	Vilma Banky 80
Wallace Beery	Bebe Daniels
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Fred Niblo 95	John Considine Jr
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Geo. Fitzmaurice 90	Ben Schulberg 78
Eddie Sutherland	Lloyd Sheldon
Henry King	Jack Warner 78
Von Stroheim 85	Julian Johnston 78
Tod Browning84	John McCormick 77

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FRED DE GRESAC	100
Bess Meredyth	92
Laurence Stallings	91
Harry Behn	91
Frances Marion	
John McDermott	87
Lenore Coffee	
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IRVING THALBERG	85
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Sam Goldwyn	82
Winnie Sheehan	80
Ben Schulberg	78
Lloyd Sheldon	87
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Jack Warner	78
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Do you know that you are doing all you can to boost it.

Edited by WELFORD BEATON

THE 20 Cents FILM SPECTATOR

Published In Hollywood Every Other Saturday

Vol. 4

Hollywood, California, November 12, 1927

No. 6

When Milton Sill's carried an Equity banner

Elder Will Hays and his pack of wolves

Unscrupulous producers easy to defeat

How Louis B. Mayer treats an old friend

AND OTHER COMMENTS, BOTH CAUSTIC AND KIND, MADE IN AN EFFORT TO SECURE FAIR PLAY FOR SCREEN WORKERS

BODY AND SOUL IF I WERE SINGLE THE MAIN EVENT SHANGHAI BOUND ROSE OF GOLDEN WEST

DRESS PARADE ON ZE BOULEVARD **HUSBAND HUNTERS** WRECK OF HESPERUS ANGEL OF BROADWAY (Advertisement)

Do you wish to be sure of your jobs?

The Spectator, without consulting any of us, has started on a lone campaign to secure decent treatment for those engaged in making pictures.

To supplement Welford Beaton's work, a committee of directors, actors, writers, and technicians has been formed to adopt a definite program of action which it hopes will lead to the correction of the abuses that screen workers are subjected to. The Committee is composed of twenty men and women who are not revealing their names, as they wish to continue to earn their living in pictures.

The Hays organization is a vicious, criminal body that flouts the laws of the country and denies those who will not bow to it a right to make a living, a right guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States.

It is the purpose of the Committee of Twenty to take action against the organization as a whole and its members as individuals. Already it has assembled an immense amount of evidence, but it needs a few more cases of violation of contract committed by producers.

If you have signed a contract that a producer has not lived up to, send us the full particulars, with names and dates. Your confidence will not be abused. Welford Beaton will vouch for the responsibility and discretion of the Committee, and will assure you that your communication will be regarded as confidential.

The day of our emancipation is at hand if all of us do our share.

The Committee has bought this space in which to make reports to you. Watch it regularly.

Address
Committee of
Twenty,
care of
The Spectator.

THE COMMITTEE OF TWENTY

THE FILM SPECTATOR

EVERY OTHER SATURDAY

Published by
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Welford Beaton, President and Editor

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HEMPSTEAD 2801

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He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., NOVEMBER 12, 1927

A LETTER TO WILL HAYS

The following letter, addressed to Will Hays in New York, was forwarded by air mail on October 24:

Dear Mr. Hays:

On the sixth of October, this year, Janet Gaynor became twenty-one years of age. Prior to that date Milton Cohen, her attorney, notified William Fox, who had Miss Gaynor under contract, that when she became of age she would not affirm her contract. Thus on the sixth of October Miss Gaynor's contract with Fox terminated, and since that time she has been a free agent.

Janet Gaynor is considered by picture people to be perhaps the greatest screen actress in Hollywood. Every producer would like to have her under contract to him. But since her contract was terminated not a single producer has made a bid for her services. One of the leading producers told me that he would like to engage Miss Gaynor, but as a member of your organization he could do nothing, as she was regarded as Fox property.

In The Spectator of October 29, and in subsequent numbers, I am charging your organization with operating in restraint of trade; I am charging that you, with full knowledge of what you are doing, protect your members while they indulge in practices that no decent body of men would indulge in; I charge you with patting Winnie Sheehan on the back while he harrasses Miss Gaynor in an effort to engage her at a fraction of what she is worth.

I have orders for articles from several magazines with wide national circulation. In these articles I am going

IN THE NEXT SPECTATOR

In its next issue The Spectator continues its fight for the rights of those who work in pictures. All its energy is not being expended on the writing that appears in its pages. Much supplementary work is being done on the outside. By the time the next issue appears this work will be advanced so far that the producers will be powerless to check it, consequently it will be made public. It will be an issue that will interest those who work in pictures and surprise those who produce them.

to go fully into the Janet Gaynor case and present your vicious organization to the nation minus the smoke screen of piety with which you surround it. In your own defence you will plead that you knew nothing of the Janet Gaynor case.

This letter is for the purpose of informing you that Janet Gaynor is at liberty, and that there is no reason why any of the members of your organization should not endeavor to secure her services.

Yours very truly,
WELFORD BEATON.

How Actors Can Help Themselves

OTION picture photography has advanced farther since pictures began than anything else that enters into their making. This is agreed generally. One reason for it undoubtedly is the fact that cameramen have maintained an alert and efficient organization. They have applied mass treatment to their individual problems, and have had mass influence behind their rights as a group. From an industrial standpoint they are the only wholly sensible craftsmen connected with pictures. The most hopelessly foolish are the actors. While foreigners are pouring into Hollywood to keep bread and butter off the dinner tables of our American actors, the latter sit around the Masquers' Club and feel sorry for themselves, or buttonhole each other on Hollywood Boulevard and spill conversation about the deplorable condition of their craft. I agree with them that conditions are deplorable, but have little respect for their lack of effort to improve them. They should realize now, before things become worse, that when it comes to a showdown the only man who cares whether an actor starves is the actor himself. He is his own best friend, and when he comes to realize it he will

SEVENTH HEAVEN

The picture, somehow, was delightfully different, Some subtle effluence beguiling the sense As the fragrance of meadows or ploughed fields or lilacs Conjures fond recollections of Life's super moments, When the rose-glow of happiness softly about us Enfolds us with intricate gossamer weavings Whose motif is love and whose charm is illusion.

So, the picture engendered an aura supernal Which enfolded the sense with its magical charm, Each sequence in tempo a smooth-flowing river That whispered the folk-lore of forest and plain; Through sunshine and shadow on this stream we swept onward.

And thrilled with each triumph and wept with each pain.

We forgot that the play was a mere motion picture; Genius alone has such artistry true. Time paused, that each gesture, each nuance, revealing, Be accorded the homage so justly its due.

We saw not alone with our eyes: our feelings Augmented each sequence from Memory's store; We perceived with the heart; its lucid revealings Affirming our kinship with lives lived before.

And thus did the soul born of this lucid picture Run Emotion's wide gamut from laughter to tears. The Illusions we cherish! Does Maturity lose them? No! The soul of this picture quite vanquished our fears.

-GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN.

see what he himself can do to improve his status. He will find that he can do nothing by himself, but that as one among many, all moving in the same direction, he can do much. One weakness of the actors' position is the fact that the principal ones among them, those who should be the leaders, are ensconced comfortably behind the prosperous shelter of contracts, and can not realize why they should become part of an organization that could not avoid being regarded as something antagonistic to the producers. It is the contract player who represents actors on the board of the Academy, and the viewpoint of the contract player is brought to bear on the actors' problems that come before the Academy, which makes that organization not representative of, and of no use to, the rank and file of the acting profession. When Milton Sills was getting one hundred and fifty dollars a week in New York he carried a banner in the Equity strike, and made speeches on street corners recounting the misdeeds of the producers. He was a great organization man then. Now he is a motion picture star, richer, and even more eloquent, and he uses his eloquence in pointing out to his less fortunate fellow-workers how foolish they would be to join the organization for which he carried the banner when producers were not paying him as much as he gets now. I credit Sills with honesty, but not with a great deal of common sense. He needs an organization back of him as much as the actor out of a job needs one. It is as important for a man with a position to take steps to protect that position, as it is for the man with no position to establish one. Milton Sills was misled as much by his own oratory as were those who listened to him. All actors, of either sex, and whether on contract or free lances, never should lose sight of the fact that in the Hays organization they have opposed to them a vicious and unscrupulous body, unactuated by a single unselfish motive, and headed by a he-Aimee who blatantly mouths a sincerity that never reaches his soul. The spectacle of the members of this organization giving their support to Sheehan's action in harrassing Janet Gaynor in order to squeeze some dirty dollars out of her, should be enough to show all screen workers what they are up against. It is with such people that the contract players will have to deal when the contracts expire. They are the people who gave their word of honor that salaries would not be cut, and then proceeded to cut them, as I said at the time they would. It is imperative that these actors who have any interest in their own welfare should use the only weapon that they can mold to force their demands on such a foe. The weapon is an organization. Without it the motion picture actor and actress will get nowhere. With it they can do anything.

Each Branch Should Have An Organization

JUST what definite steps screen workers should take towards forming organizations that would benefit them, I leave to the consideration of those who have a more direct interest in their welfare than I have. In the Writers' Guild those engaged in the literary end of the business have at hand an organization that they could make more militant if all of them belonged to it and gave their support to Grant Carpenter and the other officers who work so zealously to keep life in a body that in-

clines towards moribundity. Possibly the easiest path for the players to follow would end in the wholesale joining of Equity, though I believe the Masquers' Club should inaugurate the movement and see that it does not pause through lack of impetus. Directors should have an organization of their own. If the Academy had not been kidnapped by the producers there would be no need for any other organization. Theoretically it offers all branches of the industry a forum for the discussion of their interests and a court to deal them justice, but when it made its first effort to live up to its high ideals it went over, body and soul, to the producers and assisted them in perpetrating a rank fraud on their employees. However, it may not be too late to rescue the Academy from the clutches of those who see it merely as an instrument to serve their own ends, without regard for honesty or fair play. It is headed by a man above reproach. Douglas Fairbanks undoubtedly would give his support to any general movement to make the Academy serve the purpose for which it was organized, but an effort that produced such a result possibly would be fruitless, for the moment the Academy began to function on the high plane for which it was formed, the Hays organization would repudiate it and claim that it did not represent the real feeling of picture people. The producers will not belong to any organization that they can not dominate. Their dealings with their employees are not actuated by considerations of justice and fair play, and they will not play a minor role in an organization that functions on such considerations. As I see it, it is only by the formation of strong organizations of screen craftsmen that the reforms that are necessary to make the position of the workers secure can be effected. Forcing the Hays organization to be decent would not be a difficult undertaking. From its head down it is rather brainless. It is composed of the most incompetent business men in the world, and is headed by a man who knows nothing of either business or pictures. All he knows is politics, and no square-shooter on earth need worry about politics. If the Hays organization of itself were actuated by decent motives it would not need Hays, for when there is nothing to apologize for there is no need of an apologist. If the different branches of screen workers organized separately, then formed a central committee and selected for its head an upright, honorable man of ability, their troubles would be over, for making a monkey out of Will Hays would be ridiculously easy. Cheap politics never was a match for fair dealing, and brainlessness can not hold out against brains. The fact that there has been no progress whatever in production methods since the Hays organization was formed, that there is as much money wasted now as there was before Hays entered pictures, and that pictures themselves are getting worse, are the items in my indictment of the mentality of the producers' association. If Hays were a competent man, pictures would be made more competently; if he were a man of high ideals he would see to it that his associates did not break their promises to their em-

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ployees. A man possessing the qualities that Hays lacks would find him a soft and yielding antagonist.

Brainless Head of a Brainless Organization

ALLING names merely for the sake of indulging in verbal recreation profits no one. I maintain that the Hays organization is a brainless body with a brainless head, an opinion that is worth nothing unless it be based on facts that make it reasonable. Let us see. That the only sound business principle is that of being absolutely on the square is proven by the history of economics since the apple figured in the deal between Adam and Eve. No one but a fool would ignore such a well established principle. The Hays organization ignores it entirely. It lies to its customers. It lies to its employees. Its members lie to one another. And the Presbyterian elder who presides over it, approves everything. Although he sold the Presbyterian church to the producers, he refuses to practice the piety it professes. Although he knows that Fox has neither legal nor moral claim on the services of Janet Gaynor, he makes the rest of the wolves in his pack hold off while Winnie Sheehan snarls at the dainty little star who has captured the hearts of all picture people, and who will capture the heart of the world when her pictures encircle the globe. He argues that Fox gave Janet her chance, thus making her legitimate prey for Winnie. Let us look into that. Suppose some young fellow agreed to work for Barker Brothers for fifteen dollars a week for a specified term while he learned salesmanship. And sappose this young fellow developed faster than either he or Barker Brothers anticipated and became its star salesman soon after he began to work for the firm. Would the firm insist upon paying him only fifteen dollars a week on the plea that it gave him his opportunity to become valuable to it? Certainly not. It would pay him what he was worth because it would be good business to do so. It also would be the only honest thing to do, although the firm would not think of that angle of it, as in a sensibly run business honesty is a matter of course, and not the product of conscious thought. The Hays organization is not honest either consciously or subconsciously, therefore it is brainless. By the simple action of taking up his telephone and saying, "thumbs down on Blank", to other members of the organization a motion picture producer can ruin a man whose only crime has been his expressed reluctance to being robbed. No excuse need be given. Scores of people have been forced out of pictures by this method, but it never caused Elder Hays to miss passing the plate at Kirk on Sunday. When Greta Garbo had a misunderstanding with Louis B. Mayer, Metro officials did not deny the statements published in all the papers that she was threatened with deportation if she did not return to the lot. Hays countenanced that action. By what right? Is Miss Garbo in the country legally or illegally-under the permission of the United States government, or by the grace of Will Hays? Owing solely to the blundering incapacity of Hays and his organization the quota bill was passed in England. The British government wished to underwrite studios in which American producers could make pictures in England, but it could make no headway with negotiations with the Hays people, gave up in disgust, and passed the quota bill which is a serious

blow at our foreign trade. Hays is giving his active support to the steady importation of foreign players, despite the fact that there are hundreds of accomplished artists in Hollywood who can not make a decent living. No organization with brains would do all the things the Hays organization has done to destroy the morale of those who turn out its products. At the present time the producers are posing before the Academy as being willing to grant equitable contracts to their employees. Some months ago they told the Academy that they would not reduce salaries, then they proceeded to cut them. Their promise to adopt fair contracts will be treated in the same way. Will Hays will see to that.

Louis B. Mayer and an Old Friend

DISCUSSION of personalities is distasteful to me. Pictures are so much more important than anyone connected with them that it would be a waste of time to consider individuals merely as individuals and not as instruments that affect the welfare of the art. But as any movement for the betterment of the position of those engaged in the actual work of making pictures will be opposed by the producers, the rank and file can act intelligently to the extent that they have the measure of their opponents. They can believe in a promise only to the extent that they believe in those who make it. In dealing with producers as a body it is necessary to know them as individuals, therefore a discussion of them is inevitable. When we know the story of Sam Goldwyn's treatment of Belle Bennett we are in a better position to value his promise of fair treatment to anyone else; when we know how Louis B. Mayer deprived King Vidor of his share of The Big Parade profits we can estimate the degree of sincerity that can be attributed to his utterances. In subsequent issues I will relate these stories and many others like them, in full. I believe that the quickest way to rid the industry of its rottenness is to expose it. The last thing I wish is to have The Spectator regarded as a common scold. I have grown rather fond of the little paper, and would like to keep it good natured and free from unpleasantness, but if it is to be militant enough to be of service to picture people, it must wade in, no matter how deep the mud. During one of the meetings at the time of the salary cut rumpus Mayer made one of his righteous speeches. At its conclusion someone asked him when he had begun to sprout wings. Mayer's reply created the impression that he felt that a man's past should not be raised against him at a time when he had resolved to be of service to his fellows. Taking him at his word, the King Vidor story would be barred under the statute of limitations if he had done nothing since to take the edge off his reformation. But since I intend to relate it, it might be well to establish my justification by relating an incident that has occurred since Mayer has claimed to have established his rule of conduct on the Golden Rule. When he joined the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer merger a few years ago, Mayer's only contribution to its strength were the pictures of John Stahl. This able director was under contract to Mayer and was so faithful to the spirit of the contract that at times he had in his possession half a dozen of Mayer's checks for which there were not sufficient funds in the bank. Metro took over the contract. Stahl promised to renew it when it expired. After its expiration, and before he renewed it, he received a much better offer from another producer, but he is a man of his word, and kept his promise to Mayer. Since signing the new contract his treatment by the Mayer organization has been such that he has been anxious to leave the lot. His pictures were ruined by ignorant editing and titling and his protests were unheeded. Finally, with one more picture to do under his contract, he declared that he could not stand it any longer. He asked upon what terms he could be released. Here was an opportunity for Mayer to display his appreciation of the obligations of friendship. He did so by agreeing that Stahl could be released from his contract. But he attached a couple of conditions. Since finishing his last picture Stahl had received nine thousand dollars in salary. One condition was that he should return this money to M.-G.-M. Stahl had an interest in the profits of five pictures that he had made. The other condition was that he should assign this interest to M.-G.-M. Metro, the modern Shylock, must have its pound of flesh. It was a big price to demand of Stahl for freedom from contact with Mayer, but as contact with Mayer was something that Stahl could stand no longer, he paid the price and bought his peace of mind. It was an outrageous transaction, but is only one of those that I have in my files which show the real Louis B. Mayer. I will relate others from time to time.

Looks to Us as if the Plan Had Merit

-HERE is being repeated on page twenty-three of this issue of The Spectator an announcement made in the previous issue. The response to its first publication was somewhat extraordinary. Apparently those who provide the screen with its brains wish to improve their own status by assisting The Spectator in becoming a more stalwart champion of their interests. In some of its aspects my request to the personnel of the industry to supply me with five thousand exhibition readers is a peculiar one. I can not help becoming the beneficiary of the desire of picture people to make The Spectator a more powerful advocate of the reforms that all of us agree must be effected if the screen is to advance as an art, yet I offer my suggestion as one that I honestly believe it would be to the advantage of screen workers to accept. No one is under any obligation to The Spectator for anything that has appeared in it. The writers, actors, and directors owe it nothing for its efforts to secure for them better treatment by the producers, for anything I have written in this connection has been merely my opinion, based on my conception of fair play, and not influenced primarily by a desire to improve their conditions as individuals. My only interest is the improvement of pictures. But as the improvement of pictures can not be effected without advancing the welfare of those who make them, The Spectator is a friend of the personnel, valuable to the extent that it has influence. The more influence it has, the more powerful friend it becomes. There are certain definite reforms which I believe should be effected, and the fact that my belief is fixed is assurance that The Spectator will not waver in its support of them. Among them are:

No more importation of foreigners until the actors and directors already here are making a decent living.

A forty-four hour week for all those engaged in making pictures.

Equitable contracts for actors, writers, and directors. This includes making the six-months' option clause mutual.

Organization of those engaged in the creative branches of screen work in order to put them on the same footing as producers, who are organized.

Forcing the Hays organization to practice what Will Hays preaches.

As The Spectator is at present the only film publication consistently supporting these reforms, its support of them is powerful to the extent that it has power. It now is read by all those who have standing in pictures in Hollywood. Add to them five thousand of the leading exhibitors in the United States and it will be a publication whose utterances will have weight with producers, who would grant reforms rather than have those who buy their pictures know the truth about production conditions. The twenty prominent screen people who urged me to adopt their plan for increasing the influence of The Spectator explained to me that they were not interested in making the publication more prosperous, but were actuated solely by a desire to improve the condition of screen workers, and could think of no better way of doing it. They told me that they felt that The Spectator was the only screen paper that was wholly independent, and that their desire to make it more powerful was prompted by a selfish desire to save their own interests. It was not their intention, they said, to make their plan cost them anything. The season when all other screen publications levy tribute on them is approaching, and it is their intention to resist the insistent demands of these publications and spend only a fraction of their savings in circulating The Spectator among exhibitors. Naturally I am heartily for the plan. I would be a fool to be otherwise. I owe nothing to anyone who acts on it, and no matter how successful it may be, it will in no way affect what I write. That is the sole chance you take.

"Body and Soul" Has a Lot of Little Faults

POWERFUL story, an adequate cast, a fine production, and thoroughly satisfactory photography, yet a very poor picture, is the summing-up that I would give Body and Soul, directed by Reginald Barker for M.-G.-M. If I were an exhibitor I would not hesitate to show it, for it is better than most of the other films that we are getting now. It is only by considering what it might have been that we arrive at the conclusion that it is not very good. It is a rather interesting picture to take apart in order to see what is the matter with it. If we did not know that the Metro lot is addicted to the supervision habit we would ascribe the picture's lack of merit to poor direction, but I can not blame Barker as I do not know how much he was interfered with. I do not think that any story, no matter how strong, can hold up a picture that is peppered with little faults. I'll grant that most of the things in this one that I object to would not be noticed by the casual viewer who does not overwork his analytical sense when he sits in front of a screen. But this same casual viewer would be affected by the faults. To him, the picture would lack conviction. What the average picture patron will not notice consciously, he absorbs subcon-

sciously. The first false note that Body and Soul strikes is that it is built on the premise of a woman's lack of faith in the man she loves. We can not have perfect love without perfect faith. It was necessary to the story that Aileen Pringle should lose faith in Norman Kerry, but the reason for it is not made strong enough. Opinions on this point, however, may differ, so let it pass. Miss Pringle comes outside the door of an inn and looks off left to Kerry disappearing in an auto. To see him she would have to look to the right, on which side the car makes its exit. T. Roy Barnes is a Swiss postman. He calls at the home of an apparently rich doctor, and his actions show that he is on terms of great intimacy with the doctor and his wife. This is contrary to European traditions. A postman over there is a humble person, and a rich doctor is a man of importance, a man a postman would treat with great respect. Lionel Barrymore, the doctor, sits in a chair, and to engage in conversation with him his wife, Miss Pringle, kneels on the floor behind him, but in a position that keeps her face to the camera. Two people talking to one another would not face the same way when there is no object to draw their attention. It is the common directorial fault of sacrificing to the camera all semblance of plausibility in a scene. When Norman Kerry makes his first appearance at the inn he comes as a hero. He is the champion ski jumper of Switzerland, and is acclaimed by the populace with great enthusiasm, and the homage due a champion. In a later sequence he comes to the inn again under exactly the same circumstances. He merely enters and hangs up his hat. No one pays any attention to him. In the first sequence a title announces that with the snows of winter comes the champion. The snows of the following year bring him again, but there is no similarity whatever between his receptions on the two occasions. The handicap of repeating the business of his initial appearance, which was staged to establish his fame, could have been surmounted by picking him up on the second occasion after he had arrived. We then could have assumed that the enthusiasm of his previous reception had been repeated. Every exterior shot during the winter sequences showed blizzards blowing, giving the impression that high winds always prevail in the Alps. My own experience in Switzerland in winter was brief, but durng the few days there was not a breeze blowing. I believe such storms as we see at all times in the picture are in reality exceedingly rare.

Picture Strikes Insincere Note

HE closing sequences of Body and Soul should have been intensely dramatic. Barrymore drags his wife from her bed, takes her to a forge, brands her on the back, and as he finishes his fiendish deed Kerry arrives to rescue her. All of it is unconvincing. Aileen is shown as a stalwart girl of the peasant class; Barrymore as a man many years her senior, a physical wreck through excessive drinking. Yet the older man with the undermined constitution has no difficulty in dragging the healthy young woman through the snow. In real life he could not have pulled her two yards. The opening of the sequence gives the impression that Barrymore had been drinking for hours in the inn before he goes home and attacks his wife. Yet the fire in the forge is burning. What kept it burning

so long? And what was an inebriated doctor doing with a forge? If it was not his, whose was it? The branding iron retains its white heat at least ten times as long as it should. When Kerry, the champion athlete, comes on the scene he fights for some minutes before subduing the decrepit old man. It is an obeisance to the picture obsession for a fight, a ridiculous scene because Kerry would have settled it with one punch. After knocking Lionel out, Norman hastens to Aileen and protectingly puts his arm around her. The caress made me shudder, for Norman's arm, in the sleeve of his heavy overcoat, was placed over the spot where Aileen's flesh had been burned so deeply a few minutes before. But she didn't notice it, which proves that, after all, it is nothing but a motion picture. No intelligently produced picture has anything in it to remind you that it is a picture. Norman carries Aileen to a mountain cabin and to prove further that her back was not burned he throws her on a bed in a manner that would have given her intense pain if she had been branded. The closing sequence shows Norman gravely injured through being caught in a snowslide. Barrymore is brought to attend him. He does not know who his patient Aileen is nursing Norman. Thus the three are brought together under dramatic circumstances. But the sequence is handled in a manner that robs it of nearly all of its tenseness. Barrymore feels Kerry's pulse and declares that an operation is the only thing that will save the patient's life. It is the only pulse that I know of that can diagnose a case. The doctor makes no examination, locating the injuries entirely through the pulse, which he feels without interrupting his conversation with the people about the bed. Does Metro imagine that any audience on earth is unintelligent enough to absorb such utter rot? A title gives the impression that Barrymore intends to kill himself in order to bring the lovers together. The closing scene gives the impression that his death is an accident. There may be some argument about the premise of the story, but there can be none about the facts in the indictment of the picture. No story could be strong enough to stand such treatment. Lionel Barrymore gives a superb performance. When I wrote in the last Spectator that he is an artist who deserves better parts than he has been getting, I did not know that I would see him so soon in one that gave his great talent some opportunity to show itself. It is too bad that Metro lacks the sense to star him in a line of parts big enough for him. I do not feel that Miss Pringle got as much out of her part as she should. The impression she gave me was that, with better direction, she could have done the part full justice, an impression similar to that which Kerry's performance gave

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me. I imagine it is no easy matter to put conviction into action that is of itself unreal. But neither Aileen nor Norman gave a poor performance. As I judge the picture, I judge their work—more by what it might have been than by what it was.

Cecil de Mille Is Well Entrenched

NY picture that is made by Cecil de Mille is an important picture. He is unique. There is something about his personality that eggs one on to criticize him, no matter how slight the ground for criticism may be. I have hurled brick-bats at him myself, and probably will hurl a lot more in the same direction, but I always have found him to be a courteous, affable fellow, his attitude towards me unaffected by what I have said about him, and apparently indifferent to what I may say in the future. Both as a producer and a director he has my respect, and as a man I like him. I did not like his King of Kings, but I am interested greatly in what he is going to do next. Likewise I am interested greatly in the very satisfactory pictures that are coming from his studios. They demonstrate his picture sense and his ability for selecting his associates. Already he is giving us much better pictures than we are getting from any other studio except Universal, and perhaps when I have completed the viewing of all the productions he has ready for release, I will rate him above Universal. He has not given us a wholly bad picture since Corporal Kate, and during that time we have had many deplorable ones bearing the trademark of Paramount, Metro, First National and Warner Brothers. He is developing new talent, has a staff of directors who are doing notable work, and is building up an organization that should constantly improve the output. Possibly we can see in all this a reflection of the confidence that financial security gives a creative artist. For the first time since he severed his connection with Paramount, De Mille finds himself entrenched financially so strongly that money problems do not detract his attention from his creative work. It is reasonable to expect, therefore, that his own contributions to the screen will reach a high degree of artistic perfection and dramatic strength. We may look for the entertainment quality of a Volga Boatman to be linked with the majesty and sweep of a King of Kings. The De Mille-Pathe merger is proving to be one of vast value to both parties to it. It is a straight fifty-fifty proposition. In no sense has De Mille been swallowed. The merger has given him a more commanding position as a producer than he ever occupied before, even when he was with Paramount. He is absolute dictator of the product of his two studios, is one of the largest individual holders of stock in the new company, and holds the balance of power between the Pathe and banking interests. All this would have no significance, and I would not deem it important enough to make it the subject of comment, if De Mille's increased power and influence were not justifying themselves in the improvement of the pictures he is giving us. The Spectator is interested only in pictures, and in individuals only for the pictures they make. I have seen several new De Mille pictures lately and they have impressed me sufficiently to prompt me to speculate on the reason for the marked improvement I see in them. De Mille has given Pathe new

dignity as a distributor of features. Last week, as I record elsewhere in this issue, Pathe had more pictures on Broadway, New York, than any other releasing organization ever had at one time, and all of them were made by De Mille. And while I feel that Pathe should feel grateful to De Mille, I also feel that De Mille should be grateful to William Sistrom. In Bill Sistrom De Mille has one of the two most capable executives in Hollywood, Henry Hennigson, general manager of Universal, being the other. Sistrom has the rare combination of story sense and executive ability, plus a personality that makes him popular with his co-workers. The Eastern bankers who have money in the merger need have no uneasiness. De Mille and Sistrom and the organization back of them will take good care of the investment.

One Picture Just as Bad as Other

THILE I consider The Loves of Carmen an inexcusably vulgar picture I welcome its appearance on the screen. It will do more to eliminate vulgarity from pictures than could be accomplished by any amount of propaganda. When What Price Glory? made its appearance I credited it with technical perfections, but lamented its vulgarity. I argued then that disgusting scenes were poor things to sell the public. Prosperity is built on a steady market, and my contention was that vulgarity was not a commodity that could be sold continuously. What Price Glory? was hailed by Hollywood as a masterpiece of cinematic perfection. My voice apparently was the only one raised against it, and no one seemed to agree with me. To-day you can not find anyone in pictures in Hollywood who has a good word to say for The Loves of Carmen. It is agreed generally that it is a filthy thing, a disgrace to screen art. Victor McLaglen's beastly exhibitions of eating are condemned on all sides, and the close-up of Carmen's drawers is regarded as a degenerate touch in an unpardonably vulgar picture. But, as a matter of fact, is Carmen, the picture that is condemned, any more vulgar than Glory, the picture that was praised? I, for one, do not think so. On the contrary, I think that the first Walsh picture was more disgusting than the second. It shares with Carmen the revolting eating scenes, which in Glory were even more nauseating than those in Carmen; it was as immoral as the censors would allow it to be, and in addition to all the rest of the filth, it contained filthy language shown by lip movement, a vice that Carmen lacks. Hollywood picture people applauded in Glory greater sins than those they condemn Carmen for

LLOYD NOSLER

SUPERVISING FILM EDITOR

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possessing. What Price Glory? was art, argued those who disagreed with my adverse criticism of it. I agreed, but argued in rebuttal that as much art could be reflected in shots of the interior of a slaughter house in operation, which, not being the kind of art we wanted, had no place on the screen. But if Victor McLaglen's depraved manner of eating is art in Glory, is it not equally artistic in Carmen? Why do we praise in one picture what we condemn in subsequent ones? The reason is, as I have argued all along, that vulgarity does not wear well. No person with any business brains would put it in any picture. What Price Glory? is making a lot of money in spite of its disgusting scenes, and the Fox people imagine it is making money on account of them. As a result they repeat in Carmen the filth of Glory and succeed only in bringing down upon their heads the condemnation of all who view the picture. What Fox loses in prestige on account of Carmen will offset the profit he makes from Glory. As a result of seeing these two pictures I never want to see another directed by Raoul Walsh, and I hope I never see McLaglen on the screen again. Even if he played a bishop, I could not look at him without seeing again the things in the two Walsh pictures that nearly made me ill. I am sure that the great majority of those who saw both pictures feel the same way. The box-office value of Walsh and McLaglen has suffered, For every one who applauds filth on the screen, there are half a dozen who resent it. If it were not for the censor boards throughout the country, our present producers long since would have ruined pictures. As Edwin Schallert pointed out in the Times a few weeks ago, producers seem to strive to see how near they can come to the line drawn by the censors. A sensible producer would endeavor to keep as far away from it as he could. In Two Arabian Knights Johnnie Considine descends to vulgarity and feels himself rewarded when he listens to the laughter of those who like it. But there are not enough people like that in the world to make vulgarity pay. Fox thought there was, and invested more of it in The Loves of Carmen. It will not prove to be a paying investment.

"Angel of Broadway" a Worthy Production

7 ITH The Angel of Broadway Lois Weber firmly establishes her right to be considered as one of our really capable directors. It is an excellent production, and in spite of the splendid performances of Leatrice Joy and Victor Varconi, it is a director's picture. The story has a religious theme, which, in itself, is poor screen material, but the picture will be popular because it deals with the Salvation Army, the religious organization that has more friends than any other. Miss Weber puts great feeling into her direction. She does not resort to preachment in telling her story, and carefully avoids the opportunities the story presents to become too saintly and too sacreligious in its different sequences. The subject is a delicate one, but there is nothing in its treatment to offend anyone. Especially effective is Miss Weber with her ensemble shots. She keeps her backgrounds alive and develops her atmosphere skilfully and convincingly. Her one failing is a tendency to make her characters over act. I think repression is being carried too far on the screen, but scenes lose their force when they go too far

in the other direction. In her opening shots Miss Weber shows in a striking way the popular appeal of the Salvation Army, presenting effectively some remarkable types. Her grouping is at all times natural, and we see none of the common fault of opening a passageway through a crowd to allow the camera to pick up a main character. The De Mille people gave the picture a big production, and the director makes the most of it. The lighting and photography are excellent. Miss Joy's performance will rank as her best since Manslaughter. Miss Weber repeats the success she achieved in The Marriage Clause in bringing out all the histrionic abilities of the members of her cast. The story provides for Leatrice aping the Salvation Army in a night club act until she is overcome by her own sincerity, an old idea, but handled refreshingly in this picture. Her efforts to stifle her own conscience allows her acting ability wide range, and she is equal to all its demands. Especially noteworthy is she in a powerful scene at the end of the picture when the costume she wears in her parody on the Salvation Army leads to her being taken to the bedside of a dying girl who has requested that prayers be said for her. It is the climax of the picture and it is upheld ably by Miss Joy, Varconi and Elise Bartlett. It was directed and acted better than it was cut, as there are too many close-ups shown. In other places in the film there is also a too generous use of close-ups. Victor Varconi's performance is one of the best he has given on the screen. It is human throughout and reveals that the actor had a fine understanding of his part. Miss Bartlett also covers herself with glory in a role that builds into one of considerable dramatic strength. Jane Keckley, whose work in other pictures I have praised in The Spectator, makes an excellent impression as the leader of the Salvation Army. The Angel of Broadway was shown at the Hillstreet, which I imagine that picture people do not patronize, but it will come to the outlying houses, where you should be on the outlook for it. It is well worth seeing.

"If I Were Single" Is Quite Delightful

7ARNER BROTHERS have made a delightful picture out of If I Were Single. May McAvoy and Conrad Nagel are in it, the second time they have been together for Warners, but the first time that I have seen them as a team. If I were running the Warner studio I would dicker with Metro to make the borrowing of Nagel a permanent proposition, and I would present May and him in a series of domestic comedies along the line of If I Were Single. The screen needs just such entertainment. The words witty, humorous and funny have different shades of meaning, and all three are blended in this picture, which kept a large preview audience in a condition of contented giggling, with not a few hearty laughs. There is no story. May and Conrad are a young married couple. They quarrel, and make up. Then the fade out. That is all there is to it, but it is delightful all the way through. Roy Del Ruth directed, and made a splendid job of it. It took some skillful direction to make such a frothy thing into six connected and entertaining reels. Del Ruth's touch is light and his sense of humor keen. He gets his laughs without apparent effort, and his characters never cease to be normal human beings. He makes

an entertaining comedy out of what easily could have been spoiled by farcical treatment. In two or three places the photography might have been better, but it is not bad enough to harm the picture. I was impressed with the manner in which one sequence was lighted. There are several scenes in a library, which, for story purposes, must be dark. Ordinarily such scenes are not convincing, as the inclusion of enough light for photographic purposes makes the characters so apparent that the idea of darkness is lacking. In this picture light enters the room apparently from a street lamp, whose rays come through slatted window shades, drawing lines of light across the characters, thus preserving the idea of darkness, but enabling the audience to distinguish the players. May Mc-Avoy seems to be sweeter and more beautiful than ever. In this picture she is fascinating, so much so as to make one sorry for the men when the frequent stories of her engagement are denied. She plays her part in a captivating manner. Every time I see Conrad Nagel in a light comedy part I like him better. If he appeared in a series of such pictures as this one, particularly opposite May, he would keep the box-office cashiers busy. He has a fine sense of comedy and is one of the most accomplished actors on the screen. Myrna Loy is the girl in If I Were Single who nearly wrecks the home of the young couple. She does it quite delightfully. She is not too vampish, using only the gifts that God gave her when she goes on a still hunt for a husband. Andre Beranger is the fourth principal character. He is a capable actor, and he never gave a more clean cut performance. He is a master of the mechanics of screen acting, and is an accomplished comedian. Joe Jackson wrote the titles. All of them are good, and some of them are decidedly clever. A lot of the laughs which the film provoked were caused by the titles. If I Were Single is clean entertainment. It is a cross section of the life of an ordinary married couple. The audience is aware at all times that the husband and wife love one another even when the quarrels are at their height, consequently it giggles when the home apparently is on the brink of ruin. It is a well constructed comedy, and its direction keeps away from all movie traditions.

Remarks on One of the Little Ones

IFFANY pictures apparently are not shown very often in the houses whose doorkeepers are friends of mine. I read frequently of this prominent screen writer and that well known director whom Tiffany has put under contract, and every little while there is published an announcement of the engagement of another established star who is to appear in a Tiffany production, but the pictures that result from all this newspaper activity seem to elude me. However, the other night I ran one of them to earth. It was Husband Hunters. I do not know if it may be accepted as a fair sample of the standard that Tiffany maintains, but I have seen a lot of very much worse pictures bearing the trade-marks of the big producers. I presume Husband Hunters was made as sensibly as the small producers must make them to keep within their rather sensible budgets, but certainly there is nothing about this picture that suggests economy. There are two elaborate sets, one of a theatre, the other a cafe, that give the whole picture an air of lavishness. The cast

is an excellent one. It is headed by Mae Busch. I don't know why we see her so seldom. She is a capital actress, and in this picture gives a very fine performance. Among others who appear are Mildred Harris, Jean Arthur, Duane Thompson, Charles Delaney, Walter Heirs, Robert Cain and Nigel Barrie, all of them players who can take care of their parts. The story is as good as that from which the ordinary run of pictures is made. To sum up: we have an elaborate production, a capable cast, and a satisfactory story. But still we get just a movie. The picture lacks nothing that money could provide, but lacks the quality that only brains can supply. It is a picture that you can not lose yourself in because every few hundred feet something happens to remind you that it is a movie. Independents are not going to get very far in their efforts to squeeze in among the big fellows until they eliminate from their productions glaring inconsistencies that became movie habits a score of years ago, and which are so obviously silly that no person with brains would allow them to creep in. In one scene in Husband Hunters a bill collector comes to the door of the apartment of Mae Busch and two other girls. He carries the bill in his hand, looks at it, and hammers on the door. The door does not open. The collector looks at the bill again, then pounds furiously on the door, his face registering great rage. Only in a motion picture would a bill collector act that way. In real life he would rap gently on the door, and would not go crazy because it did not open, for he would have no way of knowing that there was no one at home. And even if he carried the bill in his hand he would not look at it every minute to make sure that it had not turned into a hot dog or a pinochle deck. The girls go to a party in a richly appointed home. During the evening the head of the bill collector appears above a screen and he demands his money. All right in a farce, but Husband Hunters is a straight comedy. It is a fool of a thing to put in such a picture. Charley Delaney learns that his sweetheart is calling on Bob Cain. He rushes to Cain's house and makes an ass of himself. It isn't done. Butlers are not knocked down and private houses entered for any such reason. Not even on the grounds of picture exigencies can these faults be defended. Their contributions to the story could have been made logically and without straining all the laws of plausibility. If the Tiffany people have in their employ all the talent with which the papers credit them, they should allow the talent to reflect itself. Their only hope of great success is to make better pictures than the big fellows, something that is not hard to do, but something that can not be done if they adhere to all the hoary movie methods.

This Picture a Treat to the Eye

R OSE of the Golden West is a delight from the opening shot to the final fadeout. George Fitzmaurice is the screen's greatest painter. One after another in this picture we have shots of such surpassing beauty that we excuse the story's weaknesses. The only thing that matters after you have seen a picture is the impression it has left with you. I carried away from the house in which I saw Rose of the Golden West an impression of an exquisitely lovely production, and a feeling of contentment that my time had been spent well. Fitzmaurice

has an extraordinary sense of composition and lighting. He uses all the out-doors to please our sense of beautythe trees, the clouds, the sea, the sky. They are the colors on his pallette, and the camera is the brush with which he transfers them into works of art. He is equally impressive with his interiors and in the grouping of his characters. In this picture he gives us some gorgeous portraits of Mary Astor, whose great beauty never was made more appealing. That portion of the picture over which, perhaps, he had no control, is its weakest feature the story. It does not build its drama in the way it should. There are many good situations in it, but none of them gripped me. The author's difficulty lay in the fact that we knew the end of the story before it got well under way. We can not become excited over the struggle between Russia and the United States for the possession of California, for we know how it ended. There is no surprise in it. Perhaps it was the fault of the direction that I did not become concerned over the fate of Gilbert Roland. Things looked tough for him, I'll admit, but he is the hero of the picture, and I know that in pictures heroes are not executed at dawn or later in the day. The manner in which Mary Astor learns that the ringing of the mission bell is the signal that will bring the United States Marines is most convenient. It conforms to the best movie conventions. There are some fine performances in the picture. Mary contributes one of them. Montague Love contributes another. It is a relief to see this perpetual villain in a sympathetic role. He makes it human and appealing. Gustav von Seyffertitz is another member of the cast. Every moment he is on the screen is a treat for me. He is a magnificent actor who makes all his roles convincing. Young Roland is still somewhat crude with his mechanics, but he has an arresting personality and should go a long way. It was interesting to watch the scenes in which he appears with Love and Von Seyffertitz. Such accomplished veterans are pretty fast company for a young fellow just getting his start, but Roland holds up his end well. I commiserate with George Fitzmaurice over the inclusion of some forced comedy and wisecracking titles. They have about as much place in such a picture as a rip in the canvas of a Rembrandt. Undoubtedly they were contributions to the production of some Burbank people who are obsessed with the idea that you must have laughs whether or not they belong. It is a silly idea. If First National would put more laughs in its comedies and leave them out of its dramas, both kinds of pictures would be benefited. When I view a picture I make notes. I find in my notes on this picture the single word, "punctuation". But I can't remember if I intended to praise it or to knock it. Hereafter I will take myself further into my confidence.

West Point in a De Mille Production

EST POINT is an American institution about which Americans do not know a great deal. But it is well advertised, and people will be interested in becoming better acquainted with it. Dress Parade, directed by Donald Crisp for De Mille, will provide the opportunity. After seeing this picture I feel that I know West Point, what it looks like, and the spirit that animates it. Dress Parade is the sort of picture that you owe it

to yourself to see. It was made at West Point, consequently contains what we need in pictures: some entirely new locations. The screen gives credit to an imposing array of technical advertisers, but even without this claim to accuracy the picture would impress us as being authentic in all its details, for it radiates an atmosphere of conviction. It was a patriotic undertaking to make it, for it presents West Point to us as a wholly worthy institution, a comforting message to carry to the nation. While I advise you to see Dress Parade when you have the opportunity, I warn you that you are going to be disappointed with the story. I can not understand how the De Mille people can give us a picture so interesting and authentic in all its physical aspects and so weak in what seems to me to be the easiest thing to get. The picture did not need a great story. A slight narrative, just strong enough to hang the atmosphere on, would have rounded out a most perfect picture. It is difficult, I'll admit, to inject a love story in a picture dealing with a military academy, or anything else equally masculine, but it is not such a difficulty that it can be surmounted only by an impossible yarn. Bessie Love, a clever and charming little actress whom I would like to see oftener, is made the daughter of the commandant, which accounts for her presence in the picture, but Bill Boyd, the hero, is characterized as a conceited ass whom such a girl as Bessie would not be attracted to. When Bill, in their first meeting, becomes so offensive that I expected Bessie to slap his face, she smiles coyly-and I had not thought that she was that kind of girl. But the greatest story crime is committed near the end of the picture, and is supposed to be the big punch. Boyd is guilty of an offense for which a fellow-cadet is to be court-martialed. The theme of the picture is expressed in the manner in which West Point takes Boyd, as a conceited, small-town sheik, and makes a man out of him. In the closing sequence, therefore, we are supposed to behold Bill, the man. Instead of confessing promptly that he was guilty of the offence, as any decent fellow, in or out of West Point, would, Boyd does a lot of heavy emoting while he is bringing himself to it; Bessie mixes her tears with his, and only in the presence of the battle flags in the chapel does Bill become the man that we thought West Point had made him. All the impossibilities of the story were unnecessary. Boyd's complete regeneration could have been planted in a scene in which he and a comrade are under fire, and the end of the love story could have been made the unknown quantity. This would have avoided what I am afraid the picture is going to be burdened with: a charge that its final sequences tear down what the preceding ones built up. The whole production deals with the manliness of the West Point spirit, but when that spirit, as embodied in the hero, is put to a test, it is triumphant only after an emotional struggle. Donald Crisp directed the picture acceptably, and will have to his credit a financial success. Crisp took only a few people across the continent with him, and made actors out of a

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large number of cadets. Only a capable director could have been so successful with such material.

"Main Event" Is Quite a Picture

TILL HOWARD knows his onions. Or is it groceries? When my children are out I can not be sure of my slang. Anyway, William K. Howard is a director who is demonstrating that he has embarked upon what is going to be a brilliant career. Some time ago he took White Gold, a story which did not contain one of the standard ingredients out of which successful pictures are made, and gave us a notable production that impressed the world. It was sombre, drab, dramatic, powerful; its locale an arid sheep ranch. Now he takes a prize fight and a city, and gives us a picture that is equally notable for its direction, although it was not possible in it to develop the intense drama that makes White Gold an outstanding production. The Main Event is nothing but a story of a prize fight, but is none the less a fine example of screen art, although its appeal will be limited somewhat by its single interest. There is not a single directorial slip in it, and there are some splendid little bits that show that Howard has slight respect for screen traditions. Vera Reynolds is the featured player, but when Charles Delaney crosses a cafe floor to ask her for a dance, he is shown in a long shot, his back to the camera, and Vera is blotted out completely. The conventional treatment would have shown us individual close-ups of the two smirking at one another, and if a star were blotted out she would consider that her screen career was ruined. The very first shot is refreshing. It shows the dance floor of the cafe. Two professionals are dancing and we see enough of their dance to enjoy it. The usual method is to go to considerable expense to stage an act and then to cut it so sharply that it means nothing to the audience. Another scene shows Vera Reynolds crossing a street. She jumps back to avoid being struck by a car, and then proceeds. It is just a little touch that gives the scene an air of reality. All the way through the picture we have the same air of reality. The characters act naturally, they indulge in no heroics, and do not call on all their emotional reserves. I saw Rose of the Golden West one evening, and The Main Event next morning. I was interested in the manner in which the climaxes of the two pictures appealed to me. As I state elsewhere, I was not interested in Roland's plight in the former picture, because the hero always comes through all right. The same reasoning should apply to Bill Howard's picture. But it did not. In the unromantic projection-room I forgot that nothing happens to a hero. I felt anxious for Charlie Delaney, and when he won his great fight I felt like cheering. That was because there is nothing about The Main Event to remind us that it is a motion picture. Bob Armstrong, the prize-fighter of Is Zat So? is Charley's opponent in this picture. He and Julia Faye frame Delaney in order to improve Bob's chances of winning. They do not hire thugs to slug him, nor do they put knock-out drops in his consomme. They merely persuade Vera Reynolds, a professional dancer, to vamp him and make him lose his sleep. There is nothing particularly dramatic about it, but it is a potent sapper of strength. That old stand-by, the triangle, is present, but it, also,

is handled quite refreshingly. Vera thinks that she is Armstrong's real sweetie, but the audience knows that all Bob's affections are for Julia Faye. There are no disturbing scenes. Julia and Vera continue throughout to be friends; they room together, and it is not until the end of the picture that Vera knows that Bob is untrue to her. But by that time she is in love with Delaney, so it doesn't matter. It is not an important story, but it is told splendidly, by a director who seems to have the notion that telling its story is the main mission of a motion picture. Tom Miranda's titles help a great deal, as his titles always help the pictures that they appear in. In addition to the members of the cast mentioned in course of this review, Rudolph Schildkraut gives a fine performance as Delaney's father and manager. But it is not an actors' picture. The Main Event is all Bill Howard, who knows his onions. Or is it groceries?

Virginia Bradford Does Good Work

-HE gentlemen who prefer blondes will waver somewhat in their faithfulness to the Lorelies when they see Virginia Bradford in The Wreck of the Hesperus. Here is a young woman who is going to be somebody. She has beauty and brains, plus that quality that satisfies one that she is a fine girl who loves her mother and doesn't use lipstick. Her lips, by the way, look like lips in the picture, not like parallel licorice sticks. One of the things I expected to comment on some time is the manner in which directors allow their female players to put so much make-up on their lips that their close-ups are hideous. There is nothing like this about Virginia. Her mouth looks like a mouth, not like the entrance to a coal mine. She has two glorious love scenes which she handles tenderly and appealingly, although in Frank Marion she has playing opposite her a boy who has nothing to give her. I do not understand why the De Mille people cast Marion in such important roles, especially opposite such a vibrant, charming and clever girl as Virginia Bradford. Hesperus bears testimony to Elmer Clifton's supremacy as a director of sea pictures. It contains some of the most extraordinary sea scenes that I have seen on the screen. I have no idea how they were made. And I don't want to know. After seeing the picture in the projectionroom I dodged Clifton through fear that he would tell me. Some of the scenes must have been produced in miniature, but I could not detect those that were. For the first time I saw the rhythm of the sea faithfully presented in a miniature. Those who never have seen the ocean will find this picture exceedingly stirring. Apparently Clifton was fortunate in finding a storm in full bloom, and he caught all its fury and relentlessness. His storm scenes are intensely dramatic. The picture opens with some striking scenes of a full-rigged ship, every one of them a pictorial gem. Even with a less interesting story The Wreck of the Hesperus would be worth seeing for its scenic value. I believe the idea of using Longfellow's famous poem as the basis for a screen story was Cecil de Mille's. It was a great idea. Right here I might state that I did not start out to make this a De Mille number of The Spectator. I was attracted by the announcement of De Mille's raid on New York, and asked to be shown some of the pictures. While I was at it, I

thought I might as well see a bunch of them. I was curious to see how the level of screen entertainment was maintained. As the reviews show, the pictures are diversified and present a wide range of subjects. I do not know which I liked best, but certainly Hesperus is up near the top of the list and should be a great financial success. On the background of gorgeous sea scenes and the overwhelming turmoil of a storm Clifton spreads a pretty romance that holds attention chiefly by the allure of Virginia Bradford. John Farrow wrote a story that follows the narrative as far as Longfellow carried it, except that Farrow is more tender with the heroine. Longfellow freezes her to death, while Farrow treats her roughly, but places her finally in the arms of her lover. The wreck itself is the main punch of the picture, and it is done magnificently. It is a mystery to me how they contrive to show the tremendous volumes of water harling themselves on the deck of the helpless hulk, tossing sailors about like corks and bringing down the rigging in showers of debris. The scenes are so impressive that they overshadow the acting. However, Sam de Grasse, Alan Crossland, and Slim Somerville contribute good performances. De Grasse is not quite so hateful as usual. He is a stern parent, but you can get his point of view, thanks to his excellent acting. In conclusion, Elmer Clifton contributes a most attractive bloom to the De Mille banquet. Station CBDM signing off.

Sometimes my belief that the screen is an art is shaken. It is evident in so many pictures that it is an industry a manufacturing industry that not only makes pictures in their physical form, but manufactures everything in them. Shanghai Bound is a typical example of the manufacturing process. In one sequence Mary Brian establishes the fact that she has no use whatever for Dick Dix; in the next she loves him palpitatingly. There is no development of the romance. It just is. There is little reason presented to account for Mary's dislike, and none whatever to explain her sudden infatuation. It takes perhaps a couple of hours for the emotional pendulum to swing from one extreme to the other, and it is a purely manufactured action. Shanghai Bound had proceeded somewhat on its journey before I arrived at the house in which I saw it, and I don't know yet exactly what it is about. But I believe a good picture will begin to interest a viewer even if he drops in when it is half over. One can begin to read a good book in the middle, and become so interested that he will go back to the beginning. I did not become sufficiently interested in the Dix picture to sit through the rest of the show to get the first of it. I saw a long sequence in which a river boat ran on a sand bar. I expected something dramatic, but it ended with the boat backing off and resuming its journey. The sequence did not have enough story value to justify its presence in the picture. Dix is too ponderous in all his scenes. He takes himself much too seriously. There are some fine shots in Shanghai Bound, but not a great deal of entertainment value.

How Harry Rapf can read a script like that for On Ze Boulevard and order it into production may be quite clear to him, but certainly is a mystery to me. As it reaches the screen it is supposed to be a French farce, a class of entertainment that has become more or less standardized,

and which possesses recognized characteristics. Its chief characteristic is cleverness. On Ze Boulevard has none. It is inane, puerile, childish, silly, and all their synonymous sisters. Metro has made several other attempts to do French farce, and the results have been such that one would imagine that it would give up the struggle and devote its attention to something into which it can put more sanity. No one on the lot seems to possess the flair that such a production must reflect. On Ze Boulevard will make money because M.-G.-M. can force it into the houses it controls, and with its block booking policy can club exhibitors into buying it. To entice the public to see such drivel is a species of fraud that is a disgrace to the screen industry. Renee Adoree, Lew Cody, Dorothy Sebastian and Roy d'Arcy, all good artists, struggle through a half dozen reels in a fruitless attempt to make something out of nothing. The same may be said for Harry Millarde's direction. The titles are as silly as the rest of it. Some of them are given a French twist by being literal translations of what was supposed to have been spoken in French, and the rest are in straight English. Their only merit is that they are punctuated perfectly.

Two contentions that I have advanced often are corelated: that we do not give screen writers enough scope in expressing themselves, and that producers do not utilize all the acting ability available in Hollywood. If the story of a capable screen writer were transferred to the screen as he wrote it, there would be no difficulty in casting it. A scene really funny on paper would be funny on the screen if any actors of ability enacted it. All they would have to do would be to play it straight. It would be

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funny if every player who appeared in it were one of our standard heavies. Two Arabian Knights proves both my contentions. Nothing that he has done in his screen career would give Louis Wolheim rating as a comedian. The football game that changed the contour of his nose made a heavy out of him, and no one cast him as anything else until Johnnie Considine had the inspiration to give him a comedy part in his picture. Wolheim is funny in it because the scenes he plays are funny, and he has enough acting ability to play them properly. The same applies to Bill Boyd. It is a far cry from his part in The Volga Boatman to that in Two Arabian Knights, but he handles both of them with equal skill. We can thank Considine for showing us the folly of standardizing our actors. When we put more thought on drawing our characters we can give less to casting them.

* * *

There are a lot of uniforms and much atmosphere in The Gaucho. But technical men need not anticipate the pleasure of finding flaws in the production. Doug has given his picture no definite locale or period, therefore there is nothing to hang criticism on. One can not say that a uniform is wrong when he does not know what country or what period it belongs to. When Warner Brothers made Don Juan they fixed the country and the period by introducing the Borgias in the story, thereby inviting critics to point out the very many technical blunders that the picture contained. Merely by using fictitious names in place of those of people whose names appear in history the Warners could have warded off all criticism. It is a mistake that producers make frequently. It is not unusual to see an opening title that reads something like this: "In the Swiss Alps early in the year 1860," introducing a story that could have any locale and be of any period. But when the place and time are fixed definitely it is incumbent upon the production to avoid all anachronisms, and to adhere strictly to the costumes, manners and customs of such place and time. There can be no anachronisms in a story that has neither time nor place.

Martin J. Quigley, writing in the Exhibitors' Herald, contends that Hollywood is provincial and that our directors and writers should travel more in order to acquire the breadth of vision that pictures need. For one who has had an opportunity to study it, Quigley is surprisingly ignorant of the degree of culture there is in Hollywood. But even if we were as provincial as this writer maintains we are, he has not suggested the right remedy. The

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most cosmopolitan director and the most traveled writer can not express themselves on the screen because they can not get what they know past the supervisor. No supervisor is equipped for the job he holds unless he has lived for a year in Europe and has traveled in other parts of the world. Irving Thalberg can have brought to his desk blueprints showing every detail of Notre Dame cathedral, but he can not feel the thrill that was mine when I first entered the great edifice and felt the roofed-in spirit of several centuries. Suppose I were a screen writer and put some of that spirit into a story I wrote for Irving. It would be Greek to him, even while he studied the blueprints.

We hear quite a lot about tempo in pictures, but few people seem to know what it is. The prevailing idea is that it is the speed with which a scene is enacted, the tempo being measured by the activity of the actors. If an actor moves rapidly the tempo is supposed to be fast, and vice versa. I do not agree with such a definition, and rather incline towards the theory that John W. Considine Jr. expounds when he talks about tempo. His idea is that it takes a whole picture to establish tempo, not individual scenes. Take a script containing four hundred scenes. One director, Johnnie argues, will shoot it in such a way that he will take six reels to tell his story. Another director will shoot the same script scene for scene, and will require eight reels in which to tell the story. The tempo of the first director is fast; that of the second slow. In either case the speed with which the actors move has nothing to do with it. The director who is a master of tempo will shoot his script in the footage in which it

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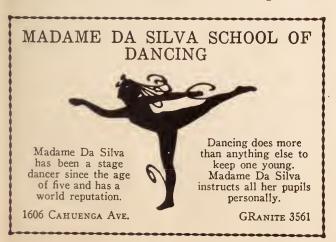
is to be released. The one who does not understand it does not know how much film he has until it is cut.

We call New York the greatest hick town in the country, but we watch its Broadway. Every director endeavors to turn out pictures whose names will add to the illumination of the brilliantly lighted thoroughfare. We must doff our hats to Cecil de Mille when we view recent Broadway showings. To have eight of his pictures showing at one time on the Street of Desire is a triumph for any producer. And the directors are to be congratulated—Lois Weber, William K. Howard, Paul Stein, Donald Crisp, Mason Hopper, Erle Kenton, Renaud Hoffman, and Cecil himself with his King of Kings. Previous to this grand splash, Rupert Julian, another De Mille director, had a picture on the Great White Way. The De Mille productions will be shown in Los Angeles at the Hillstreet. It is a house you should put on your visiting list. If you miss

these pictures you are not keeping abreast of screen

A man selling advertising space in the Christmas number of the Los Angeles Record called up the manager of a well known screen star and asked for an advertisement. He was told that as there were more such demands than the star could meet, she had decided that rather than discriminate among the different publications she this year would spend no money with any of them. "So Miss Blank won't buy space from us, won't she?" snarled the salesman. "Well, the Record for the next year will devote precious little space to her pictures." How's that for blackmail? But it is only the same old blackmail that picture people fall for every Christmas. They do not stop to think that the papers which promote these grafting editions have so little influence that they can do their advertisers neither harm nor good.

I dropped into Bill Hart's office the other afternoon. There was so much mail in front of Bill that I asked him what sort of a mail-order business he was running. He told me to open some of the letters. I opened and read seven of them. They were fan letters, and the writer of each of them asked Bill when he was going to return to the screen. This made me curious to count the letters that Bill had received that day. There were two hundred and eighty-three. As I chose my seven at random I presume all were of the same tenor. Although Bill has



not been on the screen for some time his fan mail exceeds that of the majority of those who are appearing regularly. It demonstrates two things—what a favorite Bill Hart is, and the popularity of Westerns. In a well produced series of them Bill would be one of the best box-office bets in the business.

The Spectator has hammered away pretty steadily in its campaign for proper punctuation of titles. Its idea has been to make pictures appear as if they were produced by educated people. Great improvement has been made, but I hear still the argument that the screen has its own language, an argument advanced by people who do not know how to punctuate, and for the purpose of excusing their ignorance. The titles in Body and Soul, a Metro production, are punctuated perfectly. Apparently it can be done without ruining a picture. When I see a perfectly punctuated set of titles I wonder how it is regarded by those who claim it is the screen's privilege to distort the English language.

When the United States declared war on Germany it became essential that not a minute should be lost in whipping an army into shape. The boys in the encampments were trained up to the limit of human endurance—but on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons not a stroke of work was done. Army officials knew from experience that the desired end could be reached more quickly if there were liberal rest periods. But motion picture producers know better. They know that the way to get the best work out of their employees is to keep them working all the time.

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We would have had a swell army if the encampments had been conducted on the same principle as motion picture studios.

Fox is to make a sequel to What Price Glory? It is announced that the same cast will be used. To put herself once more at the mercy of Fox and under the direction of Raoul Walsh would be the most unwise thing that Dolores Del Rio could do. She is too great an artist and too nice a girl to be sacrificed again to Fox's depraved sense of screen entertainment. The people who praised What Price Glory? hold their noses when they speak of Carmen. A third picture similar to the other two would just about ruin the standing of Dolores and Victor McLaglen.

"I'm getting sick of this stuff. They're overdoing it." Such was the comment I heard uttered by a man who sat behind me in a downtown house. What prompted it was one of those whirling composite shots showing what someone on the screen was thinking. I do not offer it as reflecting my own view, but when I heard it I wondered if the man behind me was expressing a view that is held generally. The history of the screen shows us that the interest of the public in feats of the camera does not last long. Producers are prone to overdo new ideas, and perhaps my muttering neighbor was right.

I have a friend who is the father of twins, wee youngsters having their first struggles with, "This is a cat." They can not read on the screen a word of six letters. Every Saturday afternoon a Japanese nurse, who can not read English, takes them to see a picture. When they return home they tell their parents the complete story. Which makes one think that it wouldn't be a difficult matter to get rid of titles entirely.

When I was reviewing pictures I saw along the road I traveled on a holiday trip I took a couple of months ago I mentioned that I had seen Buster Keaton's College, but as all credits had been cut out of the film, I did not know who directed it. I praised the direction. I have found out since that James Horne was the director entitled to the credit.

One defence offered for the poor punctuation of titles is that the screen has a language of its own. If we may judge from the number of people who are shown closing their eyes before they die, the screen also has a method of dying of its own.

Introspection By FRANK ELLSWORTH HATCH

"The weight of this sad time we must obey;
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath borne most: they that are young
Will never see so much nor live so long."
—King Lear.

T SEEMS to me that the past year in pictures has been the most unproductive of things worth while of any I can recall since I became interested in them, and I am free to say that I am rapidly losing the interest that I had developed, and from going every night, I go now barely once a week, and as Lew Dockstader used to say "There

JAMES A. CREELMAN

Assigned to write an original story for F. B. O. under the supervision of William Le Baron.



Demmy Lamson, Mgr. Ruth Collier, Associate are others". What's the matter with them, besides badly punctuated titles?

I have noted from time to time in the printed page devoted to those things, that there has been some controversy over transferring Rain to the screen, about who would be selected to do Sadie Thompson, and that Gloria Swanson had been finally selected. In my poor opinion, if they are trying to get a part that fits her, Sadie Thompson is not the one. If they are trying to get some one to fit the part, Gloria Swanson is not the one, and it is bad judgment either way. If any of the casters or directors or producers who are in any way connected with the business of screening Rain, had ever seen Phyllis Haver do Shanghai Mabel, or the unnamed character in The Way of All Flesh it should be perfectly apparent to them that here are artist and part made one for the other. This is only a single instance, but I think that in it lies a part of the explanation. Elaborated, it would be that they don't know their business, and haven't brains enough to hire some one who does and turn it over to them.

In the early days of my theatre going, back in the late 70's and early 80's, and indeed, up to as late as the beginning of the present century, when the one night stand was the back bone of the American theatre, there existed what was known variously as "Peanut Heaven" (so named probably from the gustatory habits of its denizens) or "Nigger Heaven", for the reason that in those days colored people were not admitted to the lower floor, and this particular spot in the theatre was the entire upper balcony, or the back rows of the balcony in houses having only one. These, of course, were the cheap seats, rarely selling for over 50 cents and usually for 25, but believe me those were the real critics who occupied them; the boys who "knew their onions", and they had a way of making their opinions perfectly understood to both actors and management. They didn't have to wait for the next day's papers to know whether the show was a hit. They knew it right on the spot, for a poor actor or a poor play was greeted with boos, cat calls and jeers, and sometimes with eggs and vegetables.

This was rough treatment, but it was usually effective, though not always. Take the case of the late, and in a manner of speaking, lamented, James Owen O'Connor, who burst forth sometime in the 80's at the old Star theatre in New York as an exponent of Shakespearean tragedies. O'Connor had been educated as a lawyer, but he got a yen for acting, and, coming into a little money, he assembled a cast, hired the Star, and one fine night blossomed forth as Hamlet. He was probably the worst actor that the American stage has ever known—worse even than Corse Payton, if you know what I mean—and when "Nigger Heaven" recovered from its astonishment, the tumult was such that even those in the front rows of the orchestra could not hear the lines.

During the remainder of the engagement, the players, particularly O'Connor, were assailed with eggs, vegetables, and on one or two occasions, a defunct alley cat. But O'Connor was persistent, and even to the last he thought he could act, and in succeeding seasons he appeared around on the stages of the beer gardens in various parts of the country, but he had by this time acquired wisdom and caution, and before he appeared to read Hamlet's soliloquy or launch "The Curse of Rome", a huge net that covered the entire proscenium opening, and with a heavy batten at the bottom, was lowered from the flies, and then the

waiters would circulate among the tables with baskets and cries of "Buy your eggs and garden truck now. O'Connor's next," and the fun was on. O'Connor is dead now, and so is the Nigger Heaven, but I often wonder what those boys would do if they had to look at some of the pictures they are showing nowadays.

I saw recently, what the billing announced as The Climbers by Clyde Fitch, with the lovely Irene Rich as the featured player. When I went in, I was under the impression that I was going to see her do Mrs. Sterling, the part originated by Amelia Bingham in 1900, but instead I saw a Spanish refugee, banished to the island of Porto Rico, and instead of a New York woman trying to climb into social prominence through her wealth, I was treated to the spectacle of a refined, sensitive and beautiful woman trying to do a female Simon Legree, which with all her ability she could not make convincing.

The Warners are relying on Miss Rich's wonderful beauty and personality to put across a lot of poor plays, just as Famous Players are with Florence Vidor, but it is shortsightedness, for beauty most always fades, whereas talent seldom does—and these two players have both. I know more than a dozen men who go to see these two players with no expectation of anything but resting their eyes. I presume the women are not so enthusiastic, any more than I am over lack Barrymore. It seems though, as if there are writers enough with ability to turn out plays adapted to the personality of any player, although that might be the wrong way to go about it, and better yet from the mass of material that is submitted the readers might make selections, better adapted.

Anyway I am getting pretty well fed up, and so are many of my friends, with the line that we are being given and I am moved to recall the story told by the late Albert Chevalier, though not in his exact words for that would involve a violation of the postal laws. As he used to tell it, there was a huckster driving a load of fruit and vegetables on a somewhat rickety wagon along a street in London, when the outfit was struck from behind by a tram car. The horse was killed, the wagon demolished, and the vegetables scattered beyond hope of recovery, but the huckster, beyond a few minor bruises, was uninjured, and sitting up he surveyed the wreck; but for once the picturesque language that is the heritage of all London hucksters, and would be the despair of even Jim Tully, failed him. He looked around for a minute, gasped and spluttered, and finally he sighed "There's no bloody language for it." That's how I feel about the majority of the recent pictures.



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AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By DONALD BEATON - The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

TEN Modern Commandments is not nearly so bad as I expected. There isn't much story, or anything like that, but there are things in it that are pretty good. The idea of a musical comedy magnate hiring a girl to keep another girl away from him is silly, but in this case it apparently was necessary to help out what little story there was. As I arrived just when the picture started, I missed the cast and the credits. Whoever directed Ten Modern Commandments has a good sense of comedy values and with a real story could make a pretty good picture. The silliest scene that has been made by anybody for a long time is to this director's credit, however. Esther Ralston admits, in the dressing-room of the chorus girls, that she is new to the chorus. Then they have an absolutely absurd fight with all the make-up in the place.

The idea of putting any girl, no matter how beautiful she is, in the chorus, when she has had no training in dancing, is silly. The revue where she was dancing was going to open soon, and the owner of it took her, a girl who couldn't dance, and put her in the chorus.

The amusement value of the picture was badly cut into by continual inconsistencies like that one. For a Famous Players' picture, it was pretty good, though.

THERE are several things in The Gaucho which are new to Douglas Fairbanks' pictures. One thing which I hope will never happen again in one of his pictures occurred in The Gaucho: it dragged. The charm of Fairbanks' pictures hitherto has been the fact that they were never serious. Even when Doug was wringing somebody's neck, he did it with such a winning smile that the audience knew he was just fooling. In The Gaucho there was a lot of serious stuff that does not belong in one of his pictures. Another weakness of The Gaucho was that there were too many girls in it. As a rule, in a Fairbanks picture, the feminine element is confined to some beautiful girl who stands around waiting to be rescued. With two heroines the star didn't have so much chance to do the stunts which have made him famous. His long suit isn't love scenes, anyway; it is action. I always enjoyed his love scenes before, however, because they were usually made when he was hanging by one hand from the railing of a balcony and fighting off six or seven villains with the other. In The Gaucho he made love as if that were the only thing he had to do. It can be said of him, however, that he had good reason to make love, as his two leading women, Lupe Valez and Eve Southern, are certainly beautiful. Miss Velez in particular has a splendid screen personality and will go a long

way. It also must be said of him that his serious sequences were beautiful. The Gaucho is a picture that should not be missed, as a Fairbanks picture which is not so good is still far better than the majority of pictures being made these days.

THE other night I saw a revival of Ben Hur, which proves what queer things moving pictures are. Ben Hur, which cost four or five times as much as Seventh Heaven, hasn't a hundredth of the real feeling that was in Seventh Heaven. Everything in Ben Hur was pompous and heavy, while Seventh Heaven got over much more drama without nearly as much fuss and bother. Ben Hur was just a lot of waste motion. There was so much atmosphere that the story got lost altogether. Moving picture methods have changed in the last few years since Ben Hur was made. One thing was the way that only the hand of Christ was shown on the screen. There was no reason why his face shouldn't have been shown. As it was, the only thing I could think of when the hand appeared on the screen was whether or not it was the same hand that had been shown before. In the matter of color photography moving pictures have certainly progressed. For purposes of comparison, take the color stuff in The Gaucho. The colored sequences in Ben Hur were so over-colored that the eye was dazzled, and it was hard to follow what was going on. In The Gaucho the colors were soft and easy to look at. However, color photography has not progressed nearly as far as it should have in the past few years. It will eventually be the standard type of photography, and any producer who will go to work now and do all he can to improve color photography will be able to be the leader among the others when, in the course of a few years the public will be demanding colored films.

TLTHOUGH Dress Parade is a good little picture, it is not the great picture I expected. If the West Point glamour had been re-moved, the picture would have been no good at all. Apparently the studio conceived the idea of a West Point picture, and was in such a hurry that the company rushed off to West Point without bothering about a story. The daughter of the commandant was the prize for which two cadets were struggling, and one saved the other's life. The plot is terribly old. The direction of Dress Parade was somewhat clumsy, and was not at all as clever as Donald Crisp's work usually is. The way the boy's freshness was built up was too obvious to be clever. There was a bit of cleverness in the fact that the boy didn't lose his freshness all of a sudden. He lost in gradually, as was natural. He was characterized as being too dumb to live, which was another mistake, as he would have had to have brains if he managed to get to West Point. Dress Parade is another example of a mediocre picture ruining the chances of an epic to be a success. There wasn't enough of the life at West Point. Only two or three of the myriad things going on at West Point were shown on the screen. A real epic, which would subjugate everything in the picture to the West Point stuff, would have no chance after two West Point pictures had already been released.

THE one weakness of pictures whose big punches depend on great sporting events is that the audiences usually know that the hero will clean up at the last moment, so there is no suspense. Bill Howard, in his clever boxing picture, The Main Event, got around this very well, as I was rooting for the hero all the way through, but didn't expect him to win. He built up the suspense very well. The Main Event was full of very clever situations, and in spite of some small inconsistencies, was a very fine little picture. The hero of the story was a young prize-fighter. His father trained him, and whenever he got a chance, he broke training. That shows a rather poor streak in the boy; because, if he had any back-bone, he would have kept training without his father having to stand over him and make him. As it was, his father let him go out every night and break training without making any effort to stop him. He should at least have remonstrated with him and tried to make him keep training. The heavy tried to get the girl to do something for him by working on her sympathy by pretending he had a broken hand. He just wrapped the hand up in a handkerchief and showed it to her. She fell for it, but if she had had any sense she could have seen that a handkerchief is scarcely the bandage for a broken hand.

POR beautiful scenery, The Rose of the Golden West was all right, but for a sensible starred but for a sensible story and action, it was no good. I don't know yet what it was all about. Apparently, Montagu Love was trying to sell California to Russia, but when the United States Marines landed and got the situation well in hand and ruined his deal, he seemed to be perfectly happy. Gilbert Roland was supposed to kill Love, but when he appeared, Roland, instead of shooting him over the heads of a crowd that was between him and Love, ran through the crowd and made a long speech, all the while brandishing a pistol. It was very apparent that he meant to shoot Love, but no one but Mary Astor made any attempt to stop him. At another place in the story, Mary Astor wished the great bells to ring so the American Marines would land and save her lover. She promised to marry a man she had just met,

so the bells would ring. A few minutes before she promised to marry this man, she had told her guardian that she loved another man. This change was so sudden that anyone would have smelled a rat, especially as she emphasized the fact that she wanted the bells ringing. However, her guardian let her get away with it. The convent where Mary Astor was a student was right on the edge of an overgrown mud puddle. Roland came and stood under her balcony at night and talked to her, which was apparently against the rules. No one heard him, however, as his horse came galloping through the puddle to her balcony. They also shouted to each other at great distances and no one heard them. The whole picture was full of inconsistencies like this.

HERE are many things in The Drop Kick which are poor, but on A brop Kick which are personal little the whole it is quite a good little picture. The story is the same old stuff that most of these college stories are, the only difference being that the hero wasn't made ineligible at the last minute. The picture got awfully tiresome in spots, particularly where Barthelmess stood around and let the wife of another man vamp him. The coach of the team shot himself on the night of the big game, but there was apparently no excitement about it among the students. Also, his wife was wandering about quite unconcerned about it. Even if she didn't love him, it would have been quite a shock, enough at least to make her leave Barthelmess alone for a while anyway. In two scenes letters were shown, one of which was supposed to have come from the coach and the other from Barthelmess. They were both in precisely the same handwriting, strange as it may seem. Later, the coach's handwriting was absolutely different on a blackboard.

HE Road to Romance is a pretty fair picture, although there are plenty of silly things in it. The plot was very old, but it was handled in a way that was a bit new. In one sequence Novarro and the girl are besieged in a cave where the only entrance is by a narrow trail. Four or five pirates come up to drive him out, and he shoots the leading one. For some unknown reason, as the trail was not very difficult, all the pirates were roped together; and when the leading pirate was shot, he pulled all the rest off with him. They all allowed themselves to be pulled off, when, if they had put their weight on the rope, they could have saved themselves from falling. That never oc-curred to them. Novarro was supposed to be communicating very subtly with the people he was trying to help, yet he did it in the most hopelessly obvious way. The picture had a pretty good cast, with Ramon Novarro starring. I do not like his work on the screen, but he is supposed to be good. Marcelline Day gave a rather color-less performance as the heroine. Roy d'Arcy and Cesare Gravina did very well.

A NY honors that are being handed around for wonderful moving pictures of the sea can all be given to Elmer Clifton, who directed The Wreck of the Hesperus. This picture contained the greatest sea stuff I ever have seen on the screen. The ship got into a terrible storm, which was done so realistically that the force of the waves could almost

be felt. There was nothing of the toy-boat sailing in a bath-tub in this, as most miniature work on the screen looks like. The sea stuff alone would have made the picture notable without anything else. As a matter of fact, there wasn't much else beside the sea stuff to make the picture outstanding, as the story was an old one and was somewhat commonplace. The love story was not so good, as Frank Marion does not appeal at all. The girl, Virginia Bradford, shows promise of being very clever.

VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

AN INDIVIDUAL CASE

My dear Mr. Beaton:

All of us of the acting profession have had experiences, or know of instances, where injustice and intimidation have been practiced by certain producers. My own experience came when I was in the midst of every conceivable trouble. Deeply in debt, with no money to employ big legal talent, and a helpless feeling because of my great responsibilities and obligations as the father of a considerable family, I was battling for my very life. This the producer knew.

All the old timers will remember the edict sent forth by the General Film Company, to the effect that any actor leaving a company for any reason whatsoever would not be employed by any other of the allied companies. A diabolical thing, much more effective.

Now this tyrant, who so nobly put me in my place, had been my friend in the early days, when he was an exhibitor, and later, the manager of a releasing exchange in Boston. He was modest, humble, almost fawning. To boost his business, I made personal appearances for him, gratis—and later risked my whole future and

reputation on a serial made with Boston capital.

At the very beginning, it was apparent that because of poor direction, the picture would be a flop. With tears in his eyes, he begged me to continue. His future, he said, was at stake. Out of friendship, I staked my future. He made lots of money, I received a goodly salary, but lost hundreds of thousands in fans. But today, because of such practices, or in spite of them, he is one of the Powers that Be in our industry.

Like some over-night-made stars, he believes the things his press department broadcasts, and when posing before his mirror sees in himself the reincarnation of Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte, Benito Mussolini, Jack Dempsey, and God.

Standing before him in his elegantly appointed office alone, (his associates had fled, sensing one of his insane

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228 MARKHAM BLDG. HOLLYWOOD JOHN FARROW

WRITER

DE MILLE STUDIO

9

outbursts, for I had had the temerity to attribute audibly his furtive actions on my entrance to shame) his fat face was flushed, but paled as he worked himself into such a rage that

any moment threatened apoplexy.

Six thousand miles away, it had been agreed I was to receive a certain sum more per week to continue and finish a picture that had already kept me off the stage and screen for nearly two years, at a cut that amounted to one-fifth my regular salary—but now that I was home, and had been gullible enough to believe his false promises, he told me I must take one-fourth the amount promised, or nothing, and dared me to refuse to continue the picture—abrogating an oral contract, made with me by one of his managers and substantiated by cable by his counsel, an officer of the company.

Then for twenty minutes, without a stop, I listened to the filthiest, insulting language, no doubt acquired in the gutters of east-side New York. My amazement was succeeded by a feeling of superiority and contempt, so that when, in a final burst of eloquence, he said, with gestures, "I will crush you. When I get through with you, you will never work in a studio, picture house, legitimate, or vaude-ville theatre." Pounding his fat chest, his eyes bulging, he shouted—his ilk always do—"I am ————, a multimillionaire. Who in the hell are you?" The entire world had known me and my work for fifteen years, so I said calmly, "I am ————, and I try to be a gentleman," and walked out. Had the conversation been recorded

Had the conversation been recorded on a phonographic disc, or overheard at the other end of a dictograph, I would have been acquitted, by any court of law in America, had I killed him. Needless to say, I have never worked on his lot since.

Continuing, he told me he had made a special trip to the Coast to pacify the artists. His kindly eyes shone with pleasure as he assured me he left them all smiling and happy, and that he believed he had saved himself millions, as under this regime, ruin seemed imminent.

All of your readers by now will name this producer without hesitation. He still flourishes. His picture appears in the papers frequently, standing beside prominent figures, well known to our American public. His press agents have glorified him. We are given to understand he is a public benefactor, modest philanthropist, and great reformer of our industry—but the truth is, no one actor,

nor group of actors, is financially equipped to buck his organization and tear the mask from the face of this last of the tyrants.

That such a man and such conditions can still exist, in this land, is much to our shame. Like David, your missiles are striking home, bringing shady practices to light, branding the offenders, and forewarning the innocent victims.

The Equity has but skirted the edges. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, like a mixture by a chemist, fearful of the result, has yet to prove its usefulness, but it is my belief that your direct, fearless policy has done more good, and lasting good, for my profession, than any other agency within my knowledge.

Your idea to recruit the exhibitor's aid, by sending them subscriptions to the Spectator, is an inspiration. I urge every actor, writer, and director, who has the good of his profession at heart, to support you in your cleaning-up crusade.

your cleaning-up crusade.

The spectacle of The Spectator battling with this bully, our common enemy, without even our shouts of approval, is despicable. I hasten to enclose my check for \$100, and trust that others will shout even more lustily.

AN ACTOR.

(The writer of the above letter signed his name to it, but I deem it best not to invite black-listing for anyone at the present time, therefore I omit the signature. The producer to whom he refers is, of course, Louis B. Mayer.—W. B.)

GOOD WISHES

Dear Mr. Beaton:

I am attaching my check to cover another year's subscription. May you live long and grow bigger and bigger!

I have greatly enjoyed your discussions of the management problems and conditions in the motion picture industry, and hope that you will continue your energetic efforts to bring

LOUIS FOGEL

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For eleven years he has been satisfying Hollywood people who have good taste in clothes.

1765½ Cahuenga Hollywood about a condition of management efficiency comparable to that existing in other large industries of the country. However, the path of the reformer in any line is apt to be rather rough, and I am moved to wonder whether your efforts have as yet produced results indicative of a changed attitude on the part of motion picture powers.

LEIGH M. GRIFFITH.

In my review of Buck Privates in a recent issue I gave credit to Buddy Post for some creditable comedy acting. I was wrong. It was Buddy Jamieson. If these two chaps want me to keep from mixing them up one of them will have to change his first name, or reduce.



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To those engaged in the creative branches of screen art

HAVE been doing, and I will continue to do, what little I can to bring about reforms in the motion picture industry that will improve your condition, make you happier in your work, and increase your earning power. I am advocating these reforms because I believe in them, not to make things better for you. But it so happens that my policy and your interests are identical, and as I have no material interest in the outcome of the campaign, you will be the sole beneficiaries of anything that we may accomplish together.

Those whose policies I have been called upon to oppose are making it as difficult as possible for The Spectator to continue to exist. They have promised that they will put it out of business, and as far as I know it is the only one of their promises that they are making a diligent effort to keep.

If on The Spectator's paid subscription list there were the names of five thousand exhibitors, the paper would be able to laugh at any efforts to destroy it. Its voice would be heeded, and it would be a valuable friend to you.

I do not command the money to meet the expense of a campaign to secure five thousand exhibitor subscribers. I see no way of obtaining it.

Will five hundred of you, whose interests are at stake, subscribe to ten copies each that I may send to exhibitors with your compliments? It will cost each of you fifty dollars, which will be an investment in your own welfare.

This proposal to the personnel of the industry is made at the suggestion, and upon the advice, of twenty leading screen people, three of whom brought the idea to me, and the rest of whom gave it their earnest support. The first plan was to make a quiet canvass without publicity, but I preferred this method.

Welford Beaton

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Edited by WELFORD BEATON

THE 20 Cents FILM SPECTATOR

Published In Hollywood Every Other Saturday

Vol. 4

Hollywood, California, November 26, 1927

No. 7

Will Hays writes us and we write him

Evidence against the producers is piling up

We give producers a little free advice

Raymond Griffith victim of blacklisting plot

What screen workers can do to help themselves

NEXTINIARE DEL PROPRETATION DEL CONTROLLO DE LA CONTROLLO DEL CONTROLLO DEL

THE GAUCHO ON HIS TOES A TEXAS STEER

THE SPOTLIGHT ALMOST HUMAN THE LAST MOMENT THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HELEN OF TROY

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To Actors and Writers

Only by organization can you accomplish anything.

EDWARD LE VEQUE

Your self-appointed committee, which is supplementing constructively the valiant campaign which The Spectator is waging in your behalf, urges you now to weld your power by strengthening the organizations that can be made of service to you.

ACTORS are urged to join Equity.

WRITERS are urged to join the Guild.

The Guild is meeting the writers more than half way by suspending the one hundred dollar initiation fee and admitting them as members without any preliminary payment. No writer now has any excuse for not aligning himself with The Guild.

Your Committee of Twenty has a long and constructive program mapped out. It is predicated upon the existence of powerful organizations of screen workers. Without such organizations we can not make ourselves effective.

Producers are organized.

We must be.

THE COMMITTEE OF TWENTY

THE FILM SPECTATOR

EVERY OTHER SATURDAY

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He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., NOVEMBER 26, 1927

WILL HAYS ANSWERS OUR LETTER

New York, November 2, 1927.

Dear Mr. Beaton:

I have not been unmindful of your recent letter relative to Miss Janet Gaynor.

This Association, by direct provision of its by-laws, "has no jurisdiction or control over the internal affairs or business policies of its members".

However, the same By-laws provide that:

"The object for which the Association is created is to foster the common interests of those engaged in the motion picture industry in the United States, by establishing and maintaining the highest possible moral and artistic standards in motion picture production, by developing the educational as well as the entertainment value and the general usefulness of the motion picture . . .", etc., etc.

and because of this we are interested, of course, in the suggestions or complaints of anyone who is connected with the industry in whatever branch of the business such a one may be. Very frequently indeed such suggestions and complaints are referred by individuals and companies to this Association and its good offices are used to bring the parties together and encourage the mutual understanding which usually brings a solution of difficulties when parties actually contact, honestly hoping for such solution. If Miss Gaynor has a complaint, no suggestion thereof has ever been made to this office, by her or anyone

IN THE NEXT SPECTATOR

The latest raid on actors' salaries, in spite of the pledged word of producers that there would be no reductions.

Some concrete suggestions regarding the most effective manner in which screen workers can protect themselves against a continuance of their insecurity.

Other comments of interest and reviews of several pictures, including Charlie Chaplin's The Circus and Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.

representing her. Do you represent Miss Gaynor? Or if not, just whom do you represent?

With personal regards, I am,

Sincerely yours,

WILL H. HAYS.

WE REPLIED AS FOLLOWS:

Hollywood, November 17, 1927.

Dear Mr. Hays:

In your letter addressed to me on November second you ask me whom I represent. I represent all picture people who are getting the worst of it from those whom you represent. I am the self-appointed champion of the brains and decency of the motion picture industry because I am almost the only person in Hollywood who can express himself fully without having his right to make a living denied him by those whose salaried champion you are. With no thought of material gain, and prompted only by my respect for justice and fair play, I am a volunteer in the service of my Hollywood neighbors; and you, who sold your convictions, your political connections and the Presbyterian church for the money of your bosses, ask me whom I represent!

I wrote you that Janet Gaynor was at liberty and that there was no reason why the members of your organiza-

THE LEGS OF CARMEN

If it is art to combine the vulgar and pure
Then let Carmen be crowned with the bays.
Not for us, the mere public, to cavil and carp;
If the vulgar display of a girl's drawers is art,
It is Art, and as such must her servants obey
The mandates of their imperious mistress, and show
In an exquisite close-up the drawers—and more,
A close-up revealed, what we suspected before,
That Carmen is the possessor of legs.

The inference was clear; there could be no doubt in the mind,
So veracious is Art—why, even the blind
Could almost discern the close relation between
The legs and their tenuous vestments—I mean
The fact was established: the fair Carmen wore them—
What wonder her lover sighed wistfully o'er them—
For Carmen has beautiful legs.

Should we criticize, then, those whose sole passion is Art; Who've the talent to diagnose each throb of the heart; That super intelligence whose genius discovers Each intricate nuance which motivates lovers, And so subtly depicts it in close-ups that we, The public, behold that which only lovers should see: The intimate feelings—not the beloved's underwear—That were merely a metaphor, as the eyes or the hair—But—so clever this picture at resolving all doubt—We felt apprehensive they might show her without—Still—Carmen has beautiful legs!

There are those who contend that such suggestive con-

Is the unhallowed spawn of vulgar conniving;
That to flirt, so to speak, such apparel in the face
Is, in modest expression, the very crux of bad taste.
But are they cognizant of the true province of Art:
To analyze, dissect, take each emotion apart?
And also that beauty is its own valid excuse,
And, though its screen treatment may have seemed rather
loose—

Carmen HAS beautiful legs!

-GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN.

tion should not bid for her services; and you reply by pulling your by-laws on me and by saying that Miss Gaynor had made no complaint to you. What do you want her to complain about? I am not in Miss Gaynor's confidence, merely having selected her case out of several score with which I am acquainted, but although I know her I can not ask her to file with you a written complaint against your members on the ground that they have not bid for her services. The idea is ridiculous.

Miss Gaynor has nothing upon which to base a complaint. As far as I know she has not been subjected yet to the usual threat made by members of your organization to artists whom they wish to employ—the threat of the closure of all studios against them if they do not meet the terms of the studios whose property your organization deems them to be. When Winnie Sheehan finds it necessary to resort to this routine threat he will not do it in the presence of witnesses.

You know that this threat is made constantly. You know that the members of your organization ruthlessly deny American citizens a right to make a living. You know that Raymond Griffith is being denied this right by the most damnable conspiracy that is maintained by those who pay your salary. You have personal knowledge of the fact that by boycotting and blacklisting your members keep people off the screen. Deny that you have such personal knowledge and you write yourself down as hopelessly incompetent, for it is something that you can learn on any street corner in Hollywood.

And upon what is the strength of this illegal and immoral conspiracy founded? What is the cohesive agency that cements your members until one of them has the support of all the others when he cuts off competitive bidding for the services of a writer, director or actor? By virtue of what power is an artist denied the privilege of selling his talents in an open market? What is the weight behind Louis B. Mayer's oft-repeated boast that he can crush anyone who will not accept any terms he may be pleased to offer?

The answer to all the questions is the same: the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Incorporated, of which you are the paid and pliant servant.

You say your organization has no control over the "internal" affairs of your members. Do you not mean "infernal"? But even if you were honest enough to use the latter word your claim would be equally ridiculous in fact, no matter what is written in your by-laws. People who have such slight regard for the constitution of the United States scarcely can claim to be righteous by virtue of their allegiance to the by-laws of an organization which makes the illegal act of one of them the conspiracy of all the others.

Your by-laws further say that the object of your association is "to foster the common interests of those engaged in the motion picture industry." Do you foster this common interest by refusing to correct an abuse only if someone complains of it? You know that by virtue of the conspiracy of your members Ray Griffith is being denied a right to make a living. Do you hold that this conspiracy becomes a fact only if he complains about it, and is not of itself a fact? If you were a policeman and I notified you that a woman was being beaten on the next

corner, would you ask me whom I represented and suggest that I pursuade the woman to make a complaint in person? If you were the chief of a fire department and I informed you that my house was burning, would you refuse to act until I had filed a written report of the fire?

It is a droll suggestion of yours that a person should file a complaint with you. I have in my hand as I dictate this letter a contract signed by one of your members and a prominent actor. The contract guarantees the actor three weeks' work in a certain picture. He went to the studio this morning and was told that someone else had been cast for the part. He protested that he had a contract, and was told to do as he pleased about it, but that he would not play the part.

I admit that I have heard of but few such cases, but it will serve as a basis for my argument. Suppose the actor had complained to you. You would have secured for him all the salary that the contract called for, for the company could not have escaped the legal obligation of its written instrument. And you would make a speech about the case to illustrate how you were "fostering the common good" of actors. And the actor would secure no more calls from any studio. His right to make a living would be denied him because he appealed to you for ordinary justice. You know this to be true. Again I say, you know it or are hopelessly incompetent, for everyone in Hollywood knows it.

Whom do I represent? I represent gratuitously those whom you betray for pay, those whom your machinery is geared to serve, but which is used to crush them. I represent the extra girl, the featured player, and the star; the writer and the director; the camera man and the technician. I have no credentials from any of them and have not been asked to serve them. I happen to have a paper which the producers have complimented me by not endeavoring to buy, and in it I give utterance to thoughts that would bring destruction to my clients if they expressed them. I am not asking even for their thanks, for I have some respect for justice, a fondness for fair play, and a liking for ordinary decency, and it would have been as impossible for me to have failed my clients as it would be for you to espouse their cause.

Be assured that there has been no change in my personal regard for you. I am looking forward to having a chat with you on the occasion of your next visit to Hollywood.

Yours very truly,
WELFORD BEATON.

Producers Are a Lot of Unutterable Asses

REVOLUTION is under way in pictures. The thrones of the mighty are toppling. The Spectator's comments on the present state of affairs in the picture industry apparently were made at a time when only a little urging was needed to stir the picture personnel into taking action to protect its interests. For some months I have been urging that it would not be a difficult task to rescue the industry from the clutches of the Hays organization. I was speaking generally, basing my remarks on the fact that the producers are wrong, making them easy victims of a campaign that has right on its side. Now I can speak more specifically. I had no

idea that the producers were such unutterable asses. But let me tell it to you from the beginning. The Spectator of four weeks ago produced results in the form of calls from representatives of the various branches of picture workers. I told them that I had started on what I imagined would be a year's campaign to improve the status of the personnel, a time which could be shortened if the personnel did something for itself. We decided to move along together. Besides my own attorneys, we have at our disposal the services of no less than nine legal firms which represent prominent stars and directors. This array of legal talent was too bulky to be comfortable until the tasks were systematized. One firm was appointed for each studio, my own attorneys acting as a clearing house. The first task was to secure affidavits which would support the counts in a brief to be filed against the Hays organization as a body and its members as individuals, under the headings, (a) Restraint of trade. (b) Violation of contract. (c) Blacklisting. (d) Specific cases of grossly unjust treatment of employees. The extraordinary ease with which the affidavits are being secured, and the damaging particulars which they set forth, are what prompted my remark that the producers are unutterable asses. They have been so brazen and so indiscreet in their treatment of employees that we have had no trouble in securing a staggering mass of evidence which now is being put into proper shape by the attorneys. One thing out of which our attorneys get a big kick is the proof of indiscretions committed by attorneys for the producers. We have, for instance, the spectacle of a Lasky attorney threatening an actor with the closure of all studios against him, making this blackmailing threat in one instance in the presence of two witnesses, and in another with the intercommunicating telephone system open, enabling three people in another room to hear the voices. We were offered innumerable affidavits by people whom Louis B. Mayer threatened to crush unless they met his terms, and have selected only enough of them to serve our purpose. Mayer is such a wild talker that his indiscretions alone are enough to crush the Hays organization, but we will have at least three affidavits involving each member of the conspirators' ring. The progress we have made to date reveals the Hays organization as such a hopelessly brainless body that attacking it is not even invigorating mental exercise.

To Draw Teeth of Hays Organization

LL the steps in the campaign to wrest motion pictures from the clutches of the pirates who now control them have been thought out carefully. It was decided, for instance, six weeks ago that I would reveal in this issue of The Spectator what we had done to date. It was decided also that the names of those prominent men and women of the screen who compose the board of strategy should not be made public until the final showdown comes. We wish to pull the teeth of the Hays organization before we give it anything to chew on. The revelations to date have been such as to lead to talk of a general strike, but I don't think it ever will come to that. Only yellow cowards would resort to the practices indulged in by the members of the Hays organization, and yellow cowards will not carry a fight to a decision. The fight is a

constructive one, although in the beginning it must be destructive. The first step is to smash Will Hays and his gang. The personnel of the industry can not be sure of its position in pictures until this is done. And it will be ridiculously easy, thanks to the incapacity of Hays himself and the numbing effect the overwhelming conceit of the producers has had on their poor mentalities. They have been drunk with power which they exercise drunkenly, leaving them open to attack from every direction. Their method is to refuse to take up the option on the services of a player, director, or writer. This is within their right, and its result would be to make a player a free agent, open to offers from any studio. But no studio makes an offer. Paramount will not exercise its option on Pola Negri, but no producer will make a bid for her services as she is regarded as the property of Paramount. She will be given the alternative of accepting the terms of Paramount or retiring from pictures. If the Paramount attorneys run true to form they will explain this alternative to Miss Negri in plain terms. As our affidavits show, she will be reminded that Paramount can and will crush her. This is a flagrant breach of the laws of the United States. The restraint-of-trade law is one with teeth in it, and steps are being taken to assure the closing of the teeth on the producers. The next step will be to reveal some of the most obnoxious producers in their true colors, which will force the companies employing them to buy up their contracts to get rid of them. Pictures are too respectable to tolerate any longer such tactics as Louis B. Mayer indulges in. Let us consider one of his favorite tricks. He gives to a director a contract calling for the making of three pictures a year at, say, ten thousand dollars per picture. The director thinks he has a contract which assures him an annual income of thirty thousand dollars. But during the entire year he is given but one picture to direct, and when he protests that he is entitled to salary for making three he is referred to his contract which contains no guarantee that he will get his three pictures. If he threatens to appeal to the courts for justice, Mayer goes crazy and screams that he will crush the director by seeing that he never will get a picture to direct in any studio. And Mayer can make good his threat, for his fellow bandits will back him up. This is what the personnel of the industry has had to put up with for a long time. It makes the position of every director unsafe. In its variations the same thing is applied to actors and writers. Is it any wonder that at last the worm has turned? But I would like to point out to all screen workers that they must stand back of those who are waging quietly the battle for their rights. Every actor and actress should join Equity and every writer should become a member of the Guild. I know that the majority of screen people are ignorant and selfish, but in this instance if their brains do not tell them that they should do something for themselves, they should listen to their stomachs. If the present conditions continue to exist stomachs soon will be clamoring.

Time the Personnel Asserted Its Strength

EVEN if the personnel of the industry did not think in terms of earnings, it is unthinkable that it should endure any longer the vicious and criminal treatment accorded it by the members of the Hays organiza-

tion. World famous actors who dignify their profession, directors to whom the screen is a canvas upon which they paint pictures of marvellous beauty or alive with powerful emotion, and writers who can weave stories for the others to transform into vibrant art, are worms beneath the feet of an uncultured upstart like Louis B. Mayer, or a petty annoyance like Samuel Goldwyn. These creative artists, in many instances men and women of fine instincts, education, and culture, must bow in humility before the mental degenerates on the Fox lot who amuse themselves in projection rooms by gazing on reels too filthy to be released. Everywhere they must make obeisance to ignorance, coarseness, and vulgarity. All this, however, might be tolerated if those so sadly lacking in brains and breeding did not bring their warped minds to bear on their treatment of those who work for them. It is hard to believe that in this country and in this age a great actor with a score of years of experience can be deprived of his means of making a living for himself and his family, by the simple means of a circle of telephone messages, all in the same words: "Lay off Blank". Only the originator of the message need know the reason; under the terms of their thugs' agreement no questions are asked, and the banishment is made complete. There is not a studio worker in Hollywood who dare call his soul his own. The personnel of the Committee of Twenty that is working with me is a closely guarded secret. Those who send in their checks for Spectator subscriptions to be sent to exhibitors request that even the exhibitors be not told who the donors of the subscriptions are. Various cash payments of fifty dollars each have been made, and I have no idea where the money came from. And this is a free country! I do not blame picture people for their cringing attitude, for I recognize the fact that they must live. But I will blame them if they do not do all in their power to help the movement that will result in ridding them of the yoke they now bear. Those whose contracts are expiring and whose options will not be taken up under the terms specified in the contracts, should sign whatever is offered them if they wish to continue to earn money. But first they should notify all the other producers that they are at liberty. They will receive no offers, for they are property, not human beings. Then they may sign anything, and in only a few months they will get new and satisfactory contracts, for by that time we will have blown the bottom out of the contract system by showing in court that all contracts being signed now are being forced on those who sign them, and that the weapon of coercion was what the law calls restraint of trade. What bewilders me about the whole thing is how the producers could be such monumental fools. How they expected to get away with their bludgeoning methods and escape a flock of prosecutions and law suits is something that I can not understand. They will find that Will Hays will be a weak reed to lean on in this emergency. The billow that is traveling towards the producers, and which will engulf

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them, is too mighty to have its course changed by anything that this cheap little politician carries in his bag of tricks.

We Give Advice to the Producers

THE SPECTATOR does not wish to be regarded as the organ of any particular branch of the motion picture industry. It believes that it takes a broad view of the questions it discusses. Those reading recent issues might gather that I am opposed to the producers merely because they are producers. This is not the case. I am not above stretching out a helping hand to them also. All my advice is not for the employees. I have considered one serious menace to the peace of mind of the producers, and having satisfied myself of the means that I think should be resorted to to remove it, I am happy to give the producers some advice that I feel it would be wise for them to accept. Please understand that I am not being generous to curry favor with the producers or to earn their thanks in case they act on my advice. After giving the matter full consideration I have arrived at the conclusion that the producers should muzzle Louis B. Mayer and Sam Goldwyn. We are quite through with them, and have on file many more of their admissions than we can use. If Mayer strikes his me-and-Napoleon attitude much oftener and in a voice that sounds like a loud speaker system enjoying static, screams his threats to crush any director or actor who opposes him, explaining at the same time how the crushing can be done, I am afraid the Hays organization will be smashed before we can get around to it. And Sam Goldwyn should be made to cease telling people with whom he transacts business just how he is keeping Belle Bennett out of pictures with the aid of the understanding that exists between all the studios. If Sam keeps on talking Uncle Sam may hear about it and play the devil with the producers before we've had time to act. Goldwyn's treatment of Miss Bennett is a matter between him and her. The feature of it which interests me, and which will interest the federal authorities, is Goldwyn's frankness in boasting that he is teaching her a lesson by keeping her off the screen. Players and directors are threatened with similar treatment if they are too insistent in urging their rights when Goldwyn wishes to employ them. Paramount is one of the gravest offenders in actually keeping people off the screen, and is scarcely less careful than Mayer and Goldwyn in hiding its tracks. It is so sure of its power that it is foolish in the application of it. One of the most outrageous cases of criminal injustice is Paramount's treatment of Ray Griffith. His reason for leaving Paramount is a matter between Paramount and him, and need not concern us. But that he took away with him the right to make a living is something that the constitution of the United States recognizes. But the constitution is but a scrap of paper to Paramount and to the other members of the vicious Hays organization. Griffith is one of the most popular comedians in pictures. As soon as he left Lasky four other producers opened negotiations for his services. He was weighing the four propositions when suddenly and simultaneously all four of them were withdrawn. The aid of the thugs' agreement was invoked. Paramount served notice on its fellow conspirators that Ray was its property. Griffith, denied the right to make a living, sought a contract under which he could make pictures in England. One was offered him if he could secure a release in this country, on the face of it an easy thing to do as his reputation is established and any releasing organization would be glad to handle his pictures. But again the Paramount whip was cracked. He could not secure a release. To make a living he must abandon his profession and seek some other work. Zukor, Fox, Mayer, Schenck, and others who form this most vicious band of cut-throats, flaunt the laws of the country and think that they can get away with it. I do not know if restraint of trade is punishable by imprisonment, but if such be the case the next annual meeting of the Hays organization should be held in the penitentiary. But it would be tough on the other inmates.

Little Difficulty in Enforcing Demands

OR over six years screen writers have been urging producers to grant them an equitable contract. They are no nearer getting it now than they were six years ago. Yet there has not been a day during the six years that such a contract could not have been secured if the writers were organized properly. Ever since pictures started, actors have been treated as if they were cattle. They are worked night and day. Contracts between them and producers are broken by the latter and the actors are warned that if they sue to assert their rights all studios will be closed to them. At present producers are bringing to Hollywood a steady stream of foreigners to reduce the earnings of our American actors. And our American actors—the poor, dumb brutes—stand for it. The Hays organization is endeavoring to coerce directors into signing contracts dictated by the producers. They are being subjected to indignities heaped upon them by the uncultured vulgarians who control the industry-and it serves them damn well right. If they haven't brains enough to get together and offer resistance, they deserve all they are getting. One thing that writers, actors, and directors should realize now is that they are not going to

HEARTENING

My dear Mr. Beaton:

I believe you honest. I have no memory of a sentence of your writing tainted by the policy of profit. I have a long list of theatrical publications that took root, blossomed, bloomed and withered under the policy of catering to the advertising department. Many of these periodicals more than crossed the borders of actual blackmail. It has been the curse of theatrical periodicals and they have inevitably and deservedly died. Your Spectator seems as yet entirely free from the stigma of policy. Your paper should live and prosper. While we may not always agree with you, you are a counter irritant that makes us think and you are immensely valuable to our industry.

I, therefore, send you my fifty dollars to be applied to the further circulation of your paper, and as I do not do this with ulterior motives of self exploitation, send your paper to the ten exhibitors you deem most important to you, as your own gift.

With cordial regards,
THEODORE ROBERTS.

be treated fairly until they put themselves in a position to demand fair treatment. I do not mean that they will have to form a union and march down Sunset behind a band blaring defiance of their bosses. The solution of their problems is a much simpler procedure. All that it involves on the part of the individual is that he should join his organization: in the case of an actor, Equity; in the case of the writer, the Guild; in the case of the director, a strong organization that must be formed. I am sorry that at this time I can not reveal you more of the plans of the Committee of Twenty, but I want to impress upon you that the plans are predicated upon having screen workers organized, and doing your part in this connection is all that will be asked of you. A large proportion of writers, actors, and directors are brainless asses from whom nothing may be expected, and those with sense enough to do something to benefit themselves will have to drag the drones with them, but that does not relieve them of the necessity of taking action. In the past their psychology has been wrong. They have regarded the producers as supermen, against whom their own efforts would be impotent. They have regarded the Hays organization as too powerful to combat. Yet when you take it apart you find that it is composed of ordinary mortals without brains enough to be on the square. Although the producers would be the chief beneficiaries of any improvement in screen conditions, they lack the sense to realize it. They consider it good business to treat their employees like serfs, and to subject them to every form of indignity and injustice that warped minds can conceive. How many actors and actresses have reason to know that a contract to play a part for Paramount is not worth the paper it is written on if Paramount wishes to repudiate it? "We will make it up some other way," is the standard promise of Paramount when it ignores its own written agreement, and from then on it ignores the promise. And what can the actor do? He could appeal to the courts and secure judgment-and thereafter get no more parts to play in any studio. This is the condition that soon will be corrected. With all branches of studio workers thoroughly organized they can demand justice and get it. The plans of the Committee of Twenty contemplate providing legal services for actors, writers and directors too poor to employ attorneys. That much I will tell you. The weakness of the position of the producers lies in the fact that they are wrong. They have untold millions of dollars at their command, but this strength is offset by the fact that their employees have right on their side. And right need never be afraid of dollars.

It's Mean to Treat Will in This Way

HE Authors League of America is trying to get Will Hays to tell it why some stories are banned from the screen, while still dirtier ones are made into pictures. It cites They Knew What They Wanted, produced by Paramount, and Rain, produced by United Artists. The authors are unkind to embarrass poor Will in this way. His whole strength lies in the superstition that exists that he is a man of great power, that he has the authority to approve this story and disapprove that one. In theory he has, but in fact he hasn't. He does what he is told to do. Joe Schenck, Louis B. Mayer, and someone in the Para-

mount organization give him his orders. To ask him why he approved Rain is to put his Presbyterianism to a severe test, for if he tells the truth-that Joe Schenck told him to—it would be a serious blow to his reputation as a czar. Already the reputation is threatened by the talkativeness of Mayer, who boasts to authors that he will have Hays approve any story he wishes to screen. Hays is not in a position to approve or disapprove a story on its merits. With him the sole consideration is who wants to screen it. His real bosses, United Artists, Paramount, and Metro, can get anything past him, but with any of the less important members of his organization the case is different. De Mille had the first idea for a West Point picture, and his company was the first on the ground at West Point to make such a picture. Priority is supposed to give the members of the Hays organization the right to their ideas. But Metro decided to make a West Point picture also, Mayer cracked his whip, and Hays gave him sole permission to use West Point in the title of a picture. Had the position been reversed-if Metro had been first in the field with the idea-De Mille would not have been allowed to make his picture at all. Some day the Hays organization will fall apart from its own rottenness. Assuming for the moment that Hays has some authority, how can he ban any story in the future after having approved Rain? I am not arguing on moral grounds, for I think that Rain is a powerful drama. I would like to see it put on the screen exactly as it is written if there were some way of keeping children from seeing it, but until we can make pictures for selected audiences we must deny ourselves such dramatic treats. As long as he poses as the czar of motion pictures Hays must take full responsibility for passing Rain. It was unfortunate for him that the story was given Raoul Walsh to direct, for all the dramatic strength of the original will be stifled in the stench that Walsh will put on the screen. He shot scenes that were so disgusting that they nauseated those working on the set. He inveigled Gloria Swanson into being an innocent contributor to one scene that is too disgusting for me to describe in print. When he works on the Fox lot he makes such scenes solely to be rewarded by Winnie Sheehan's guffaws in a projection room, and no doubt he and Winnie have split their sides over this scene which he shot on the United Artists lot. It will make a valuable contribution to the filthy film already in the Fox vaults, for there is no place for it on a lot as decent as United Artists'. When Walsh's conception of John Colton's fine drama reaches the public under the name of Sadie Thompson, poor old Will is going to have a devil of a time explaining how he came to approve it. The easiest way out would be for him to confess that Joe Schenck made him, but he will not take it, for at any cost his dignity must be preserved. It is interesting to speculate on the probability of the Hays organization disintegrating from the inside before it can be attacked on the outside. Its less important members surely will not continue to expose themselves to the penalties that can be imposed on them on account of the unprincipled actions of a few of its leaders. It is a corporation that may be proceeded against in the courts and the smallest member can not escape responsibility on the plea that he had no voice in determining its policies.

"The Gaucho" Has Everything

THE GAUCHO will be judged more by its departure from what we expect from Douglas Fairbanks than by its merits as a motion picture. That is natural. For years Doug has educated us to expect from him a certain kind of picture. That we liked the kind, Doug's tremendous popularity throughout the world bears testimony. The joyousness of Robin Hood, the whimsy of The Thief of Bagdad, the audacity of Black Pirate, bore the true Fairbanks flavor as we conceive it. It was as reasonable to expect a tragedy from Doug as to look to him for a picture with a religious theme. Getting the latter, our first reaction is that Doug has taken liberties with us, that he lured us into a theatre to see a certain kind of picture and gave us another kind, and in estimating the merits of what we get we can not avoid basing our estimate on what we thought we were going to get. That is unjust to both Doug and the picture. The Gaucho is his offering as a picture, and our inclination is to view it as the offering of himself. I saw it before the opening at the Chinese, and told Doug that I was disappointed with it. I saw it at the opening and then told Doug that I was delighted with it, and for good measure I told Mrs. Mary Fairbanks, his wife, that I thought it was a splendid picture. By the time I saw it a second time I had recovered from my surprise at the theme, and viewed it critically as a motion picture. I found a production sweeping and impressive both in conception and execution, a well knit story, drama, comedy, and fine acting. I can think of nothing else that a picture must have to make it a satisfactory example of screen art. The Gaucho, in my opinion, is the finest thing that Douglas Fairbanks has given us. He has dared to be serious, and has done it well. I believe that he did not succeed in putting on the screen everything that he wanted to, that he found it difficult to express himself freely because he was handling thoughts unlike any that he had ever before tried to translate in terms of the screen. There seems to be some indecision in the cutting, and a too labored attempt to keep the various interests of the story advancing abreast, but they are minor faults that did not keep me from thoroughly enjoying the picture. That, after all, is the only thing that matters about The Gaucho as far as I am concerned. I enjoyed it, and Doug's sole idea in making it was to provide me and you with enjoyment. Douglas Fairbanks is one of the principal assets of pictures. As a man he contributes to their respectability, and as an artist he contributes to their dignity. No one else connected with the screen is supplied so abundantly with talents so varied. He writes his own stories, conceives his own settings, practically does his own directing, acts his part capably, and can leap over a windowsill as gracefully as Pavlova can execute the gavotte. He dares greatly in spending money on a production, but is such a good showman that he never has had a failure. Screen people have reason to be as proud of Doug as they are. If we could trade the entire membership of the Hays organization for one more man like him we'd be a great deal better off. But there I go again! This paragraph is supposed to be about The Gaucho, not about the goitre from which the screen is suffering. But as long as we have even one Douglas Fairbanks we are not so badly off. And an art

that can produce a Gaucho is a long way from being decadent.

Doug as an Actor and an Athlete

OUG'S own performance in The Gaucho is easily the best he ever has given on the screen. Throughout his career his grin and agility were commodities that he could sell so readily that there was no necessity to trot out anything else that would give us the measure of his ability as an actor. But in his latest picture he reveals himself as a real artist. Two finely done bits are his reaction to the tragedy of the leper's touch, and the expression of his joy when he realizes that the magic pool has cured him. In his lighter moments he is as effective as ever, and the way he keeps on, year after year, doing his athletic stunts is extraordinary. Quite as extraordinary is the grace of all his movements. I can't recall any previous picture in which it was so apparent. After the scene in which he reaches the roof of a building by swinging from story to story on awnings, I heard a woman near me whisper something about a double. It might interest anyone with a similar idea to know that one morning Doug and I were strolling around the United Artists lot and came to the awnings set. I asked him what he was going to do there. He did not tell me; he showed me. If he would swing his way up those awnings to amuse me it is not likely that he would employ a double to do it in the picture. Doug's keen sense of pictorial humor provides The Gaucho with some rich comedy. When he and the girl quarreled and Doug made no bones about striking her, he injected comedy and at the same time made a big contribution to his characterization. It pointed up the com-

EXHIBITORS!

For the second time since they pledged their word of honor that there would be no cut in salaries, motion picture producers are engaged in making a drastic cut. The present cut is confined to actors and actresses. When it has been established, there will be a reduction in the salaries of directors and writers. The first cut means that players whose presence in casts have made pictures profitable to you are to be supplanted with unknowns who will bring nothing to your box-offices. There will be a lowering in the standard of the pictures that you will buy for the next year. Good pictures can be made only by the employment of good actors, and the good actors are being eliminated. Producers are engaged in cheating you as they are cheating their employees. They are making their pictures more cheaply. See that you pay less for them! When I put the question squarely to Louis B. Mayer he refused to deny that he has a contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer that will net him eight hundred thousand dollars a year. When you buy an M.-G.-M. picture remember that you are contributing to this preposterous salary. At the same time remember that Mayer is squeezing every cent he can out of those whose popularity brings business to your houses. Spring these facts on the Metro salesmen who ask you to buy their pictures. Economy in motion picture production is a good thing. But see that you get your share of the saving by paying less for your pictures!

pleteness of his transition from a good natured ruffian to a man with reverence for the saintly girl of the shrine. Estimating him as a producer, Douglas Fairbanks has no peer in the business. He has given The Gaucho a magnificent production, one that of itself makes the picture a notable one. The amazing thing about it is that all the scenes except those showing trees were made on the United Artist lot. All the imposing mountain scenes, the passes between gigantic cliffs, the Miracle City as a whole, so well constructed and photographed that the world will think them genuine location shots, were made within an area of about a quarter of a city block, and in the heart of Hollywood. Theodore Reed, the manager of production and probably the most skilled engineer in pictures, deserves unbounded praise for his great contribution to The Gaucho. Next to Douglas, the most interesting person on the screen is Lupe Velez, the vibrant youngster who makes her debut in this picture. Within one year this young bundle of energy and brains will rank among our most prominent stars. As a first effort her performance is extraordinary. During its course she portrays practically all the emotions, and the rapidity and completeness of her transitions are remarkable. Both the shrine girls, Ceraine Greear and Eve Southern, reveal a full appreciation of the spiritual quality of their parts. An unusual feat is accomplished by Albert MacQuarrie, the victim of the black doom. Although his costume is gruesome and his face is hidden, he manages to give a definite characterization to the outcast. Charles Stevens gives a very good account of himself, and Gustav von Seyffertitz, Michael Vavitch, and Nigel de Brulier contribute the performances we could expect from such finished artists. For some reason we never attach much importance to the director of a Fairbanks picture, for we can not be sure just what his contribution to it is. F. Richard Jones directed The Gaucho, and the fact that the whole picture is good means that whatever he contributed to it has merit. We can set the picture down as one of the finest things that Douglas Fairbanks has done. Whether his admirers will accept such a radical departure from his usual offering will be told by the box-office.

Sid Grauman Puts on a Great Show

CID GRAUMAN has an uncanny way of keeping one or two jumps ahead of the people who poke money through the openings in his box-office. He must have felt that one more of even the fine prologues that he has given us in the past would be just one too many, and as an eye-opener for The Gaucho he gives us a vaudeville show. It is the only prologue—to give it its generic name -that I have seen in the past couple of years without being more or less bored. We Americans are funny. The stolidity with which we accept prologues and stage performances sets us apart as a long suffering race. The European is not so complaisant. When he doesn't like a stage offering he gives tongue to his displeasure. One of my painful memories is the joyous abandon with which I leaned back in my seat in a Paris theatre and shouted, "Rotten! Give him the hook!" until the misery of the poor devil whose dancing did not please the audience, became so apparent that I became ashamed of myself for my contribution to the shouts of hundreds of others and solaced myself only with the thought that even if anyone heard me, it would lead to nothing as they probably have another word in French for "hook", even if they use them. But I have sat through prologues and stage presentations in Los Angeles picture houses and thought longingly of the house in Paris where one may express himself. At the premier of The Gaucho, however, my only yells were those of approval. Sid has given us an excellent entertainment, nicely balanced, colorful, and tuneful. It is not weighed down with an attempt to create and maintain atmosphere in keeping with the theme of the picture that is to follow it. A motion picture is a selfcontained piece of entertainment, which carries its atmosphere along with it and is not dependent on the volume of noise and the riot of color that the house manager can buy. Such prologues attracted us at first by their novelty, but we've had an overdose of them. Sid, astute showman that he is, sensed this, and assembled a bunch of entertainers that make us forget all other prologues and want to go again to enjoy his. It strikes a serious note for a moment only to prepare us for the beauty of the opening sequence in The Gaucho, a sequence that is done in subdued colors, and which is one of the most artistic things that Technicolor has given us. It takes us gradually from the richly colored stage presentation to the black and white of the main portion of the picture. I suppose producers some day will realize that we will not have perfect pictures until they reproduce the natural colors of the objects photographed. In a quarter of a century of steady progress pictures have not progressed past the point of showing us the difference in color between white, pink, and red roses except in various shades of black and white. That color photography is too expensive, is the claim of those who make our pictures. To quite an extent the excessive cost is a figment of the producer's brain, for I don't think many of them have taken the trouble to find out what the cost is. If the big studios would adopt a sane method of operating they would save so much money that they could give us gorgeous features in color at less expense than it takes them now to turn out their black and white features. In a projection room the other day I saw a dream sequence done in Technicolor for Corinne Griffith's next release. It is exquisite, and demonstrates the perfection Technicolor has achieved in reproducing natural colors on the screen. Imagine a George Fitzmaurice feature done in Technicolor!

The Private Life of Helen of Troy

THE Private Life of Helen of Troy certainly misses fire. First National had an inviting opportunity to give us a sparkling comedy, but gums it up. It is rich in production value, and that is all that can be said for it. One of the chief weaknesses of the production is the editing. I do not think I ever saw a more striking example of a picture being spoiled by close-ups. I was treated to so many totally meaningless close-ups of Maria Corda that I lost all interest in her. "Which gown shall I wear?" is a spoken title accompanied by a close-up which fills the screen. If Miss Corda had spoken a dramatic title in the picture it would have been necessary to enlarge the screen and use the Magnascope in order to give it the emphasis it required to distinguish it from the flock of

ordinary close-ups that mean nothing. Possibly if the wife of the director had not been the leading woman the picture would not have been ruined as it was. The over-indulgence in close-ups was particularly stupid in this production. The humor of the story lies in the application of modern conditions to ancient times. It is a modern story in an old setting, consequently it derives most of its humor from the setting. And First National was lavish with the setting, which in the editing was blotted out constantly and in its place we have gigantic heads of the characters. Devoid of all drama, it is essentially a picture in which there should be no close-ups. That the audience appreciated the humor of the idea was shown by the laughter that greeted the title, "Join the navy and see the world", spoken by Lewis Stone, the Spartan King, when he declared war. There is nothing in the title itself to cause laughter, the humor being in the use of a well known modern slogan in such a setting. But, as I have said, First National gave us as little of the setting as it could, apparently on the theory that Maria Corda is the whole picture. She should not have been cast in the part of Helen. She has beauty, but nothing else that the role calls for. We have dozens of girls in Hollywood who could have given the characterization the scintilating comedy interpretation it needed to make the picture the gay thing it might have been. The story is one that called for a display of real cleverness in its screen interpretation, but that quality is lacking. There are few laughs in it despite the fact that the screen gives a "comedy constructor" among those present on the set. The idea of needing someone to "construct" comedy for a story that is all comedy is ridiculous -much funnier, in fact, than anything that came of it. The picture would have been one long laugh if it had been directed with a sense of humor, without any effort having been made to force the humor. Alexander Korda-in the case of his wife it is Corda—directed the picture with a total lack of appreciation of its comedy possibilities. The humor is all American, and the direction all Hungarian. First National's folly in not giving the story to one of the many American directors with a sense of humor probably will cost it several hundred thousands dollars, the difference between what the picture is and what it might have been. The scene showing the wooden horse entering Troy loses much of its effectiveness on account of the failure to point it up. A title states that the Spartans have given up and left for home. It should have been explained that they had retired on account of their failure to enter the city, and the audience should have been acquainted with the fact that there were soldiers in the horse. Perhaps First National will argue that everyone knows the story of

LUCK OR BRAINS?

Arrived in Hollywood October 12th. Was cast by Mr. Wesley Ruggles in "Finders Keepers" on Oct. 15th. Finished with Mr. Ruggles on November 14th. Was cast by Mr. Gorden Cooper in "Sin Town" Nov. 15.

JACK OAKIE

the wooden horse. In my day in the newspaper world we had a rule that you must never assume that the reader knows anything. It should be applied to pictures. Among the people who will see the picture there will be millions who never heard of this story. To them the horse entering the city will mean nothing. A strenuous attempt is made to save the picture with titles. There are twice as many as there should be, and they are only half as funny as they might have been.

Mostly About Me and Mrs. Sam Rork

OME months ago there was a brief paragraph in The Spectator to the effect that producers were overlooking a good bet in Hoyt's A Texas Steer. I said that a most entertaining picture could be made out of what had been a successful play. We will fade out on that and fade in on the breakfast room in the Sam Rork residence in Beverly Hills. Present, Mr. and Mrs. Sam. Mrs. Sam reading The Spectator. "You seem to attach importance to everything you read in The Spectator," said Mrs. Sam. "Well, listen to this," and she read the brief paragraph. Then she continued: "You have the story. Get busy. And I'll give you another idea—get Will Rogers to play the part of the congressman." Until she brought Will into the conversation, Mrs. Sam and I were fifty-fifty, with Sam himself nowhere at all. Mrs. Sam's second suggestion put her away in the lead, but I feel that she and I are entitled to the million dollars the picture is going to make. Perhaps my estimate of the profits is too conservative, for if ever there was a sure-fire box-office picture, A Texas Steer is it, and I feel that Sam and Will should be grateful to Mrs. Sam and me. I must remember to tell Sam to send in his check for fifty dollars for ten subscriptions to be sent to exhibitors. But perhaps after Mrs. Sam reads this I won't have to. A Texas Steer is going to be an outstanding success because it is a good picture and has in it the best loved man in the United States, and all the European countries, including the Scandinavian. If I wished to subject it to a searching criticism from a purely screen standpoint I could pick many holes in it, but I could not get away from the fact that I enjoyed every foot of it when it was ten or twelve hundred feet longer than it will be when released. Will Rogers has such a hold on the affections of the public that anything with which he is connected will find favor. I doubt if Mark Twain was as close to the country's heart as Will has become. His personality is one that catches the imagination of all classes, and his personality registers strongly all the way through the picture. He is no great shakes as a screen actor, but he is Will Rogers, and that is all that is necessary. He fits his part so admirably that he really is playing himself, consequently he gives a perfect performance. His ability as a writer has expression in a decidedly clever set of titles, and his skill with the rope is demonstrated hilariously in a sequence near the end of the picture. Richard Wallace's direction is peculiar. To me the picture looks as if it might have been made ten or twelve years ago. The technic of that period seems to be in evidence. Heavy curtains are drawn over windows through which sunlight enters, but it makes no difference in the lighting of the room. All the lighting is old fashioned. Every interior is illuminated brilliantly, but the

source of the lighting is not revealed by shadows. The grouping also is old fashioned. In nearly all the scenes the characters line up facing the camera. But no one will notice such things in this picture. A picture featuring Will Rogers could get away with murder. There is a long cast of notable players, too long to be enumerated so near the end of a paragraph. Louise Fazenda gives one of the most brilliant performances of her career. All the acting honors go to her. Never before have I seen her display such a scintilating comedy sense. Ann Rork and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., carry the love story, and do it delightfully. In the length in which I saw it A Texas Steer contains many fine and interesting views of Washington, but I am afraid some of them will have to come out to bring the picture down to proper footage. It is a production that can go into the big and little houses all over the world. In this country it will be one of the most successful pictures of the year. It comes at a time when First National needs such a success, and I insist that thanks are due Mrs. Sam Rork and me.

Introducing to You Mr. Paul Fejos, Genius

PAUL FEJOS is a name that probably you never heard before. But you will hear it again. Fejos is an extraordinary picture genius. There are others like him roaming around Hollywood, yearning for an opportunity to express themselves on the screen, but starving while they yearn. They are the ones, at present unknown, who are going to do more for the future of the screen than those who are now famous through their connection with it. No art seems to have advanced far on a full stomach. The pace always is set by hungry men, and more inspiring things have come from garrets than from palaces. Fejos differs from other short-rationed geniuses

JOSEPH JACKSON

Welford Beaton in The Spectator:

"Joseph Jackson wrote the titles of If I Were Single. All of them are good, and some of them are decidedly clever. A lot of the laughs which the film provoked were caused by the titles."

JOSEPH JACKSON

has just titled three other comedies for Warner Brothers; and his adaptation of *Powder My Back*, starring Irene Rich, is now in production under the direction of Roy Del Ruth.

LICHTIG AND ENGLANDER
Representatives

in that he got his chance. He has made a six-reel picture, The Last Moment, which, in my opinion, is one of the most outstanding works of cinematic art that ever was brought to the screen. It opens with a title setting forth that in the last moment of a man's life there passes through his mind a complete review of his existence on earth. The first shot shows the clutching fingers of a drowning man, which is followed by a dissolve to a small boy just old enough to have a mind which forms memories that he will carry throughout his life. Then for six reels there is presented to us a complete biography of an ordinary man. Otto Mattieson plays the man and throughout the picture gives a splendid performance. But that is not important. Fejos is the hero of the production. He wrote the story and directed it, and with this one effort demonstrates that he stands among the few really great directors. Sequence dissolves into sequence as Mattieson's life enfolds before us, and when it is over we feel that we know him more intimately than it was ever given us to know anyone-and there is not a title in the entire six reels. Fejos's extraordinary ability as a director is demonstrated by the evenness with which he handles all the phases of the man's life, his moments of exaltation and depression; his gaiety, his gravity; his depravity as a drunkard, his triumphs as a great actor; the sordidness of his purely sexual love, the cleanliness of the great love that came to him when the war had made him over-all the phases are handled with assurance and conviction. Just as a man in his lifetime experiences every variety of emotion, so Fejos in his direction runs the same full gamut, and never falters once. There are many extraordinary shots in the picture, the camera work of Leon Shamroy being quite as meritorious in its way as the contributions of Fejos. The Last Moment is rich in production values. It has in it ships and railroads, cities and the country, a dive and Monte Carlo, a cheap theatre and a grand one; there are hundreds of people in it, and the atmosphere is maintained faithfully-and the whole production cost four thousand dollars! Between the first shot showing the clutching hand of the drowning man, and the last showing the hand disappearing beneath the water, we have an egrossing, superbly directed, splendidly acted motion picture, and it did not cost one tenth what a big studio wastes on every picture it makes. For seven months Fejos, Shamroy and George McCall, the man who roams around the town so entertainingly in the Hollywood Citizen, went on short rations while they tried to raise money to allow Fejos to put his story on the screen. Samuel Freedman, president of the Fine Arts studio, gave them an office on credit, but did not have enough faith in the idea to put actual money behind it. Edward M. Spitz, a young fellow from the East, was seeing the sights of Hollywood when he met Fejos. Spitz had forty-five hundred dollars. Fejos interested him, but told him he probably would lose his money. Spitz was game. He said he'd shoot the roll, all but five hundred, which was held out for the gang to eat on. Perhaps Spitz will lose his money yet. Although the story of the picture is told so plainly that a child could understand it, I feel that exhibitors will steer shy of it on account of its sheer artistry. But it is a picture that the public should see and that everyone in Hollywood should study. If the plan for a motion picture hall of fame goes through, I hereby nominate for a large

niche Paul Fejos. He has won his right to immortality, even if he never makes another picture.

Dog Pictures That Entertain

HE setting is right for me to discuss dog pictures. One of my dogs is squeezed in beside me in the big chair in which I do my writing, and my pad is resting on the back of another that is curled in my lap. It is late and we are the only members of the household who have not gone to bed. It is the nightly routine. Virgil and Chang have other interests when the world is awake, but at night they deem it their duty to sit up with me until I put the cap on my fountain pen and shake out the cushions upon which they sleep. As long as I write, each of them prefers to be uncomfortable and near me rather than comfortable at a distance. God was in a generous mood when he gave us dogs and planted in us a love of them. But although I've had one or more of them all my life, no dog picture that I have seen has appealed to me. All of them have given us dogs we do not know, doing things that dogs can't do. For me there is more drama in a dog's head in the lap of his master, his eyes looking the greatest faithfulness that we know, than there is in a Strongheart getting his man beneath a snow-capped peak in the Canadian Rockies. I like my dogs to be friends, not policemen. In the early days of The Spectator, long before its army of readers grew to its present imposing proportions, I urged producers to give us pictures based on the qualities in a dog that we like, his faithfulness and his great love for man. De Mille seems to be doing it. I

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have not seen His Dog, but the other day I went out to Culver City and in a De Mille projection room saw Almost Human. I did not know what I was going to see, for the title, like most titles, conveyed nothing to me. I had no idea that it was a dog picture. When the first shot appeared on the screen I was delighted to see that all the actors were dogs, some of them well bred and the others the product of delightful abandon on the part of their parents. Frank Urson directed the picture in a manner that stamps him as a dog lover with a sense of humor. The way he handles the opening conversation between the dogs to plant the story is highly entertaining. One of the dogs asks the others if they would like to hear the story of how he and his mother got a couple of humans out of a mess, and the others being willing, he proceeds to tell it. Throughout the picture the story-telling dog, really the hero, speaks the narrative titles, thus maintaining the atmosphere which envelopes the picture from the first. I suppose I am too fond of dogs to be a competent judge of a picture in which they appear, but if you happen to share the fondness with me I am sure that you will find Almost Human as truly delightful as I did. If you have children in the family take them to see it, even if you have to sit through one of Jack Haley's presentations before it starts. The hero dog is just dog, his mother a police dog and his father a magnificent pointer, a cross that could produce nothing but intelligence and an overwhelming power to love. Towards the end of the picture the dogs do things that no dogs on earth could do, but by that time you'll be so fond of them that you'll overlook it. I am confident that De Mille is opening a rich vein with the kind of dog pictures that he is making. If he can interest the dog lovers of the world he has no need to worry about the rest. I believe, though, that the perfect dog picture will be one in which the dog is the leading character although he does no acting. The story should revolve around him without taking him out of character. Before dismissing this picture I might mention that Vera Reynolds and Kenneth Thompson are the chief humans in it. It is a long time since I have seen Thompson. He has a screen personality that appeals to me.

Some Comments on Mystery Pictures

WO hundred and twenty thousand dollars is a ridiculous price to pay for a play as screen material, but if I were a producer and had to pay that much money, I would rather get Broadway for it than any other play that I have seen. There is a melodrama that could be shot from the play script. Admirable as it is as stage entertainment, I believe it can be made into a still better picture. It has everything that should be in a picture and I hope Universal has enough sense to put into its screen presentation all the quality that makes it successful as a play. The play characterizations should be followed. To cast a standard heavy as Dalton, or to let whoever is cast to play the part as a standard heavy part, would be to rob the picture of what could be one of its strongest features. I have written many times that the screen has the wrong conception of a villain. He should be a cheerful, pleasant fellow, instead of the sneering brute who always is served to us. The heavy in Broadway as I saw it at the Mason is exactly my kind of heavy. No

man is wholly bad, and this villain isn't. His love for the girl is clean and sincere; he apparently is loyal to his friends, and he is generous with his smiles and his laughs. He does not perpetrate one act of villainy that does not come within his code. The detective is another character that should be cast wisely and played as it is on the stage. To show this character as one of the usual cigar-chewing, frowning dicks of screen tradition would be to spoil another big part. In all its essentials Broadway is a mystery play, with the mystery explained from the first. There is drama in every scene in which the detective and the heavy participate because we know that one is a murderer and the other an officer of the law. This makes the play, and will make the picture. When I reviewed Roland West's The Bat I said that it would have been an infinitely better picture if we had known from the first who the bat was. It would have given us the same dramatic thrill we get from Broadway. West differed with me. He pointed out that The Bat as a play ran for three years on Broadway, and that he put it on the screen as it was played on the stage on account of its great success as a play. If West's reasoning were logical the screen version should have run three years on Broadway also. I don't recollect that it ran three weeks. West's weakness is that he thinks in terms of the stage, and wholly successful pictures can be made only by people who think in terms of pictures. Paul Leni made an infinitely better picture of The Cat and Canary that West did of The Bat because he translated into screen terms all the stage suff that gave The Bat its three years in New York. With lights and atmosphere Leni made his picture as thrilling as West made his play, and when West made his picture he translated the play literally, missing all the opportunities that Leni made so much of. If Leni had given Cat and Canary the treatment that West gave The Bat, it would have been necessary for us to know the solution of the mystery from the first in order to be interested in the unfoldment of the story. But Leni's fine direction made a picture that thrilled me, while all that West accomplished was to bore me. Producers steer shy of mystery stories because they are hard to make interesting. If they let the audience in on the mysteries from the first they could give us a series of thrilling melodramas that would be successful at the box-office. Broadway should teach them that. It is the finest melodrama that I have seen. We now will engage in a few minutes of silent prayer that Henry Hennigson

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and his co-workers will prove equal to making a picture from it.

"Spotlight" Excellent Screen Entertainment

ARAMOUNT at last has given Esther Ralston a picture with a thought in it. The Spotlight, directed by Frank Tuttle, is an excellent piece of screen entertainment. In it Miss Ralston gives the best performance of her career, or of as much of her career as I am acquainted with. Nicholas Soussanin, in whom I take a proprietary interest as I was the first to draw public attention to his ability as an actor, contributes a masterly characterization of a theatrical manager, and Neil Hamilton, who always impresses me as having everything a leading man should have, plays opposite Esther and contributes largely to the general excellence of the production. But it is Tuttle's direction that gives this little picture its outstanding qualities, in spite of the high standard of the acting in it. He tells his story in a straightforward way, does not wander far afield for laughs, avoids over-straining to gain a point, and shows an excellent sense of composition. Lighting and photography are effective. In the first sequence we get a glimpse of Arlette Marchal, the beautiful and accomplished French actress whose great talents have been overlooked by Paramount for the two years she has been on its pay-roll. I have seen her in a succession of small parts, for some of which she was not suited, but which as a whole convinced me that she could have become a great favorite if an effort had been made to make her one. Her exhibition of temperament in the opening scene causes Soussanin to boast that he can take any girl and make a great star out of her. To make good the boast he picks up Esther, most unpromising looking material, but the first that he saw. When he begins with her she is Lizzie Stokes, but when he presents her to the public she is Olga Rostova, a famous Russian actress, under which name she scores a tremendous success. As we watch the picture we forget that actresses are made by this deliberate method. Thanks to Tuttle's direction, and the convincing acting of Miss Ralston and Soussanin, the whole thing looks convincing. Neil Hamilton comes on the scene and falls in love with Olgo Rostova, and Lizzie Stokes falls in love with him. Her marriage does not suit the plans of her manager, and he tells her that when Hamilton finds out that Olga is Lizzie, he will realize that he has been in love with a person who does not exist. It's a clever story idea, and, as I have said, is told excellently by Tuttle. Although the ultimate outcome has been made obvious by well established motion picture traditions, some suspense is maintained in working out the plot. Miss Ralston, who looks quite attractive in a black wig, gives a very worthy characterization of the Russian actress. It reveals her in a new light. She and Hamilton have one strong scene when he accuses her of playing with his affections for publicity purposes, but most of its force is lost by the manner in which it is screened. All we see of it are the heads of the two characters, who have to put over their quarrel entirely by their facial expressions. I do not understand why some director does not grasp the obvious fact that the public must be tired of seeing enlarged faces on the screen, and that to rely more on full figures would be a pleasing novelty. This quarrel would

have been much more effective if it had been shown in a medium shot taking in the full figures of the two characters and enabling them to register the drama with something besides their faces. I'm getting awfully sick of close-ups.

Universal's contribution to the prize-fight cycle is On His Toes, a Reg Denny picture that will not lose this popular star any friends. The star's characterization is consistent throughout. He does not play the cheerful, grinning Denny we are used to. In this picture he is the spoiled darling of an indulgent grandmother and takes

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himself very seriously. It is a definite characterization, and Denny handles it in a way that shows that he knows something about acting. Fred Newmeyer directed. The picture is free from the irritating little faults that so many directors put into their work, and by the enumeration of which I am able to give a picture a full-length review. It takes me just as long to see a faultless picture as it does to see a faulty one, but the latter compensates for its lack of merit by giving me something tangible to write about. When I've said that On His Toes is an entertaining little picture, one of the best of the prize-fight series, I've said it all. One thing I might add, though, is that Reg puts it over the rest of the fellows by looking as if he had a right to play a fighter. When the championship bout takes place in this picture we see some real fighting. Mary Carr is splendid as Denny's grandmother, and Laon Ramon, an attractive and clever youngster, starts the picture off well by a spirited interpretation of Denny as a boy. No fight picture with Denny in it would be complete without Hayden Stevenson in it. Stevenson is in this one and contributes a very good performance. Barbara Worth plays the girl.

Sherwood of Life, Johnston of Motion Picture News, and various other writers well posted on screen conditions, lament the fact that pictures are so bad that stage presentations have to be resorted to to put them over. Even K. C. B., who by virtue of being my older brother-get that OLDER-should know better, based a long article in my Contributors' Number on the same argument. Stage presentations are not offered in downtown houses to compensate for lack of entertainment in pictures, and have nothing to do with their pulling power. There is a tremendous investment in the downtown houses all over the country, and to protect it the public must be lured away from the neighborhood houses. Why should I go downtown to see Gloria Swanson at a cost of sixty-five cents and transportation, when by waiting for two or three weeks I can see her on the next corner for forty cents? To get me to go downtown I must be offered some attraction that I never will be able to see at the next corner. If I want to see Eddie Peabody I must go downtown. His presence in a house showing Gloria's picture is no reflection on the picture.

A committee of three quite charming extra girls waited on me and discussed with me the free circus which Paramount staged to put in some picture. The young women were indignant, and asked me to become so. They said

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that every person who strolled in from the street and occupied a seat at the ringside took a day's pay from an extra. I became indignant. Everything that is put in a picture is sold to the exhibitor and I do not believe that Paramount is justified in getting something for nothing and then selling it. There is in Hollywood a large army of extras who remain here in the hopes of getting enough work to keep them from starving. Their presence is one of the industry's assets. Sensible producers would seek opportunities to hire them, and on no occasion would look for volunteers to take the bread and butter away from them. But have we any sensible producers?

I clip this from the Film Daily: "'Can we ever get away with it?' should never become a popular slogan in production circles. Never should a director who ranks with the best have attempted to include several shots in a current release which would have raised a storm of pro-

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"THE KING RESOLVES"

Resolved: I will be recognized as the best Director in the Industry by January 1, 1932.

In order to attain this position, I WILL:

- (1) Bombard the Producers, Directors, and Writers, with Personal Letters and continue in this procedure to the point where I succeed in making a connection in some capacity at one of the Studios, so that I can demonstrate my Ability, Ideas, and Experience, in the making of Living, Sparkling Motion Pictures.
- (2) Bend every effort to make myself known in the Industry, and a personal Friend of every Person working for Honestly Characterized Film Plays.
- (3) Earn a living for my Family while carrying out the above program, by Writing Real Stories constantly, and carefully, for Magazine and Book publication.
- (4) In the event that I am not Directing by January 1, 1930, I resolve to form my own Company on this date, and Direct and Produce Human, Loveable, Interesting Pictures. The kind the Public wants, but fails to receive.
- (5) To be Master of my own destiny as far as my God will permit.

This Document was signed, and sworn, in my presence, and having known the Author very intimately for the past twenty-five years, I can vouch that he will carry out every resolve he has made.

ANTHONY C. HIBBS 1742 WEST 49TH STREET

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test throughout the length and breadth of the land. Likewise no legitimate reason should ever exist for another director, equally capable, to take one of the best drawing cards in pictures, place him in a house of doubtful reputation and build a doubtful sequence around the incident." One thing that the screen has suffered from has been an overdose of such criticism as this. A paper that lacks the nerve to give the name of anyone it criticizes should keep out of the criticizing business. If the Film Daily will slip me the names of the two directors it is afraid of, I will bawl them out.

At a Beverly Hills dinner party last week the conversation turned to foreign films. A supervisor connected with one of the big studios contributed largely to the discussion. He never has been abroad, and all the rest of us have, but he expressed his views on European subjects with a finality that left little else to be said. The conversation finally reached J'Accuse, that extraordinary French film which Abel Gance made in Paris in 1920, and which was shown in this country the following year, when it made a great impression on those who took an intelligent interest in the screen. Those who saw it will recall that it dealt with those who died in the war rising from their graves to enquire into the reason for it. As the discussion continued the supervisor remained silent. Finally he leaned over to me and enquired in a whisper, "Say, who the hell is Jack Hughes?"

Dick Arlen, Paramount's most recent young man to be exploited as a great Western star, labors under the slight handicap of not being ble to ride a horse. I have been laboring under the impression that that was all a Western star needed to know. Warner baxter was getting along all right as Jack Holt's successor until one bright morning when they were shooting a scene showing Warner, as a peerless rider, sitting on a horse. The horse moved. Right then and there Warner decided that Westerns were much too rough for him, and he quit. And now Dick is having the same tough time. His double can not be used in the close-ups of him riding, and the camera man must be on the alert to get his riding shots in the short interval that elapses after the horse begins to move and before Arlen falls off.

One of the queer things about the screen industry is the manner in which it ignores promising talent. The other day I saw a picture directed five years ago by Frederick Stowers, who also wrote the story. It was his first attempt and revealed him as an author and director of marked ability. In it were remarkable characterizations by Noah Beery, Johnny Harron, and Ethel Grey Terry. But the picture never got Stowers anything. It's a great business for overlooking promising material. In any other line of work someone would have seen Stower's possibilities and he would have advanced rapidly.

Listen to Will Hays: "To me there is but one interest and that is the interest of all of you and of the public you serve, to the end that every individual, every company and every branch of the business may be fixed in its position of certainty that the rights of all are equally sacred and sacredly equal." I imagine that the right of Ray Griffith

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ALFRED HUSTWICK

FILM EDITOR AND TITLE WRITER

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to make a living would come under the heading of "sacred" rights, yet the organization that this flannel-mouthed hypocrite heads is denying Ray that right. Apparently among the things that Hays holds sacred—in fact, much too sacred to use—is sincerity.

K. C. B. has published a book of the things he writes. If he were not my big brother, two years older than I am —I am sore yet at the woman at the Montmarte who thought I was his father—I would tell you that there is a great deal of tenderness and sweetness in the book; much rich humor and kind philosophy that make you feel better as you read them. It is a splendid little book to give as a Christmas present to someone you like. You can get it at any book store, and it costs only one dollar.

In shooting Rose Marie Metro is taking liberties with the Canadian mounted police. It shows them getting their men in the province of Quebec. The mounted operate in Canada only west of Manitoba. Provincial police do duty in all other provinces, and even if the mounted trace a man as far as Quebec the case would be handed over to the provincial body. In this picture also Western saddles will be shown in general use in Quebec. Metro seems to be badly in need of the services of a technical man who knows something about Eastern Canada.

Ever since I received the Loew memorial edition of Variety I have been trying to figure out how I can find language that will express my disgust and at the same time get by the postal authorities. Before the grass grows green over the grave of Marcus Loew Variety persuades motion picture people to pay it three hundred dollars per page to advertise their respect for the memory of a man

most of them never knew. It is ghoulish grafting that is the epitome of rotten taste.

Saw Eddie Carewe driving on the Boulevard the other day, and a little later saw Louis B. Mayer. Both were riding in cars with large red "fire" signs on them. Eddie and Louis must have been in a hurry when they left their respective studios, for they were not wearing their rompers and red tin helmets, and neither was carrying an axe.

As a general thing the most satisfactory shots on the screen are those in which the stars do not appear. The minor characters are not shown in close-ups, which make the shots quite refreshing.

In Back to God's Country there are scenes showing rivers frozen over and snow covering the ground, yet bears are running about. Bears hibernate in winter.

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AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By DONALD BEATON - The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

REAKFAST AT SUNRISE is a pretty poor picture for as big a star as Constance Talmadge. She is clever, and would be a sensation in comedies with a real story; but in frothy little things like this picture, where she has nothing to do but wear pretty clothes and pose around, she will never get anywhere. Mal St. Claire is supposed to be a pretty good comedy director. If he is, he certainly was off his feed in Breakfast at Sunrise. There were three characters in the picture that had nothing to do with the story. Marie Dressler, as a queen of some mythical kingdom, and her two subjects wandered around for no apparent reason. They might just as well have not been in the picture at all. There were some beautiful scenes in Breakfast at Sunrise, the best being the one which was put in for the sole reason of justifying the title. Don Alvarado, who is a very pleasing leading man, and Miss Talmadge were having breakfast in the garden at sunrise. The whole scene was beautifully done. When one figures how much money was spent on Breakfast at Sunrise, and what some poor director who is walking the

streets could have done with that amount, it seems terrible waste. Breakfast at Sunrise certainly hasn't done much for the advancement of art on the screen, and it should be the responsibility of anyone engaged in any art to see that that art is advanced by every piece of work done by him.

ESTHER RALSTON in a black wig is something unusual, also Esther Ralston getting a chance to do any acting. In Spotlight she gets a chance at both and does fairly well. As a picture, Spotlight is quite pleasing. The finished acting of Nicholas Soussanin is the big feature of the picture. The direction, by Frank Tuttle, was very well done. Soussanin, as the stage magnate, was not allowed to fall out of character at all. Only once did the director let him waver in his characterization. There was one scene where I thought he was going to make love to Esther Ralston, which was absolutely out of his character. That was partly Soussanin's fault, because at times his emotions are hard to understand. In one scene,

Esther Ralston was feeding swans in a Public Park, dressed in a get-up which would have gathered a crowd that would have filled the park. She was attracting no attention, however. The only things wrong with the picture were small and unimportant, and on the whole it was pretty good. The hero got over his surprise very quickly at the fact that the Russian he had fallen in love with was really an American girl. He proposed to her just the same, only a few minutes after he had found that out. He would have waited at least a day or so to make up his mind. Neil Hamilton did as well as he usually does as the hero of the piece. Arlette Marchal was on the screen for just a short time, but she was very good.

REELS and reels of nothing but Billie Dove's beauty can get tiresome when there is nothing else to the picture, which fact is proved by the American Beauty. It is one of those pictures in which the faults are hard to pick out. On the way home from the theater, I had to ask my sister just why I didn't like it. The story was impossible, and the action dragged until it almost put one to sleep. Jack Wagner was put down as the comedy constructor. If the gags in The American Beauty were

part of his comedy construction, then he should have asked to have his name not given on the screen. The attempts at humor in the picture were wooden and uninteresting; the characters were not human; and the whole thing was impossible. I liked The American Beauty because it gave me a chance to see Alice White again. Her work in Breakfast at Sunrise was clever, as is her performance in this picture. She is a type, but just the same she should go far on the screen. Walter McGrail is another favorite of mine. His work is always so perfectly done. Lloyd Hughes was the leading man. Edythe Chapman, who had only a small part that was far from in keeping with her talents, was also in the cast. I would like to see her on the screen more often.

THERE isn't much that can be said for The Fair Co-cd. The story was the usual impossible one that most of Marion Davies' stories are. The whole story was built around a girls' basketball team which had a man for a coach. A man would never coach a girls' basketball team. He was apparently a student, too. The whole college got wildly excited about a bastketball game between two girls' teams. That was absurd, because no college would get all excited about a basketball game during football season. The story took place during football season because Marion Davies came to the college at the beginning of the fall term. The idea of the student body having a rally for just a mere basketball game was also silly. The whole thing was silly like that and made the picture poor. There were some good touches of humor in The Fair Co-ed, the chief one being the parade of vehicles in protest against the prohibition of cars at college. Joe Farnham's titles were very good.

THE only good thing in The Forbidden Woman is the ending. When Jetta Goudal was before the firing squad in one of the final scenes, I was terribly afraid that the old, time-worn stunt of having a pardon come at the last minute was going to be rung in as the final atrocity of the picture. Paul Stein's direction of The Forbidden Woman was very poor. There were too many situations that were very old. Joseph Schildkraut was attempting to make the acquaintance of Jetta Goudal, who was standing against the rail of the ship with a funny looking vest over her regular dress and some mosquito-netting on her head. He made her acquaintance by getting caught in the netting. Instead of smashing him, she gave him a smile. She should have known better, because he immediately began making violent love to her. That was absurd, because no sane human being would have started in quite so precipitately. The whole picture gave the impression of being technically incorrect. I don't know anything about the French army, but

it seems funny that an order, which the commanding officer had to sign, could have been signed just as well by another officer, even if he was senior to the commander. One of the main things in the picture that got on my nerves was the wardrobe that Jetta Goudal had to wear. She looked like an animated ragbag. The only bright spot in the picture was the work of Victor Varconi. He possesses one of the most likeable personalities in pictures, besides having no small talent as an actor. To see him on the screen is to like him immediately. To my mind, if Jetta Goudal is starring ma-terial, he certainly is. I had finished this article, but Dad came in and said that he thought The Forbidden Woman was very good. He knows more about pictures than any man in the world, but, like the man who jumped out of the airplane without putting on his parachute, he has made a rather serious mistake.

THE independent producers are soon to be "the" producers. Instead of getting players under contract. In then devoting their energies to fighting with them and trying to break the contracts, they sign up their casts by the picture. Thus they save money and get the right people for the right parts. The big studios are letting out so many contract players that a lot of the big names are going into independent productions. There they are paid what they ask, and are not hampered with a lot of quarrels with low-brow producers. The big studios being under the delusion that they are entirely self-sufficient, do not realize that if they keep on letting out contract players and the players go to the independents, the public will leave their pictures and go to the independents too, and by the time the big studios get their new players popular, the independents will be in power. The Port of Missing Girls is an independent production with a cast such as I have mentioned. Barbara Bedford, whom I like on the screen tremendously, headed a strong cast. The picture was directed by a very good director, Irving Cummings. The sets were good, and there wasn't anything cheap-looking about it, but I dare say it cost a good deal less than a picture of that type would at one of the big studios. There was nothing seriously the matter with The Port of Missing Girls, but there were many little things. The girl's

father rushed right into a radio broadcasting studio and started to talk over the radio. In a real studio he would never have gotten away with that. Also, the "school" in the picture was too raw to have lasted a day. If the independents would pick a little less ponderous subjects for stories, their pictures would be better.

THERE were some queer things in East Side, West Side. George O'Brien decided to end his life in a blaze of glory, so he started through town wrecking speak-easies. Hitherto, he had been shown as a very upright young man who never took a drink. How, in his drinkless condition, he managed to know so many speakeasies is a mystery to me. At another time the subway where he was working started to cave in. He held it up while the workmen got to safety. It was all right as a feat of strength, but it didn't ring true on the screen. At another place he jumped out of the back of a truck and everybody who wasn't doing anything around that neighborhood proceeded to jump on him and beat him up. That also scarcely rang true. In the ship which sank, the boy's father sood calmly by the rail and let himself be drowned. He made no attempt to save himself. The whole picture was honeycombed with just such things as that, and as a result, wasn't very good. The work of George O'Brien was the best thing in the picture. In his more serious scenes he was a pleasant surprise, as I did not imagine he could act like he

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STORY of the BOX-OFFICE

By NORMAN WEBB

In A recent editorial on the cover of one of the industry's leading trade papers the editor went to great lengths to tell how much better the New York picture theatres and the prologues they presented were than those of the Los Angeles theatres. He literally "razzed" the local theatres and especially the presentations of their larger first run and road show

While I will admit that some of our presentations are just a trifle too long to suit me, they are successful at the box-office as an aid in helping to put weak pictures over and after all that is what counts. And yet, regardless of how good a picture is, there isn't a prologue in a hundred that can not be considered an aid in getting the money into the box-office. A snappy presentation or a picturesque prologue is the very thing to get the audience in the right frame of mind to receive any picture, as has been proven time and time again.

This "certain editor" went to great pains telling how terrible it was to have to sit through a Sid Grauman or a Fred Miller-Jack Laughlin prologue in order to see a certain picture. He brought forth the false argument that the New York method of just throwing open the doors and starting the picture right off the bat was so much more successful than the Los Angeles prologue idea.

As a matter of comparison he stated that The Big Parade in conjunction with Sid Grauman's prologue only held out twenty-seven weeks in Los Angeles while in New York it ran almost two years—ninety-five weeks to be exact—without any prologue. But he forgot to mention that the theatredrawing population of New York is approximately eight million five hundred thousand against one million one hundred thousand in Los Angeles. In other words in order to equalize the Grauman's Egyptian run the New York stand would have to be four years and two months in accordance with the population of the cities, while as a matter of fact it was less than half. More power to that master showman Sid Grauman and his popular prologues.

In the four and a half years that Grauman presided over the Egyptian Theatre he presented only twelve different pictures, which averages the runs to about twenty weeks each, or only about two and a half new pictures a year. Some record, to say the least, for a city of this size. And of all these bookings only two, The Covered Wagon and The Ten Commandments outran The Big Parade and both these pictures cost more than twice as much to film as The Big Parade.

And speaking of Los Angeles and prologues, it is interesting to note how

Abe Erlanger and the McCarthy booking-office grilled Ben Hur here last fall in its local run at the Biltmore theatre. Grauman had signed an optional contract for the run of this production at his Egyptian theatre with a guarantee of an eight months' run, which approximately would have netted at least three hundred thousand dollars to the M-G-M Distributing Corporation.

When Erlanger learned that Grauman was planning a spectacular prologue to preced Ben Hur he told Grauman that he would only sell him the picture, Ben Hur, and not any costly prologues or the name of Grauman's Egyptian theatre. Grauman told Erlanger that he would think it over and he went right then straight to United Artists' office and bought Mary Pickford's Sparrows and Doug Fairbanks' Black Pirate for a double feature bill to supplant the supposed Ben Hur run.

Accordingly, Erlanger only had one alternative—to put Ben Hur in his Los Angeles Biltmore theatre, which he eventually did. Considering this great spectacle and all the publicity it had received, the Biltmore theatre run without a prologue was more or less of a failure, only lasting sixteen weeks and grossing approximately two hundred and sixty thousand dollars, of which the net could not have been more than one hundred and fifty thousand dollars or less than half of what the Grauman run would have netted. In other words Erlanger's trying to tell Grauman how to run his theatre for the Ben Hur showing was an out-and-out loss to the M-G-M corporation of at least one hundred and fifty thousands dollars cash, plus an additional fifty thousand dollars loss in exploitation value.

Many prominent people in film circles were greatly disappointed when their ideal premier theatre, Grauman's Egyptian, was turned into a second run house last August. When I heard the news I grabbed Sid Grauman at a meeting of The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He told me that while the theatre still had his name he no longer had anything to do with the operation of it as it was now being operated by West Coast, and that he was devoting his entire time to the new Chinese theatre. On calling the West Coast offices, I was informed that the Egyptian theatre was now to be considered a first run Hollywood theatre. This struck me as rather funny. If we are to have a first run in Hollywood, why not in Beverly Hills, Culver City, Gardner Junction, Watts, or what have you? Since Hollywood and Los Angeles are one and the same, Grauman's Egyptian, once the most publicized theatre in the country, is now considered a second run house by the populace, and the difference is certainly seen in the gross business. While Grauman operated this house it played to an average gross business of twenty thousand dollars weekly and now it is only doing about half that, from around nine thousand five hundred dollars to eleven thousand dollars weekly with no signs of building any higher.

In a way this seems too bad when we consider the great shortage of road-show houses in Los Angeles. Since the Forum has been transferred into a combination vaudeville and picture house, Grauman's Chinese and Miller's Carthay Circle are the only two available road-show houses.

Grauman's Chinese now holds the same high place that the Egyptian formerly did only it is more modern and is also capable of doing a little bigger gross business since it has three hundred more seats than the Egyptian. Fred Miller's Carthay theatre is building better both in presentation and average gross business than any other road-show house in the country. But why shouldn't it? Not because it is a beautiful theatre and ideally located, for there are many such houses, but because of the management. The Miller Brothers, Fred and Roy, are Los Angeles' real pioneer showmen. And they have had many tough deals in the past, first with the old California theatre on Eighth and Main, and then with the Figueroa theatre, but they have struck it right with the Carthay Circle under its present operating policy. In the year and a half that this theatre has been open Fred Miller has only found it necessary to book in four features, which is just as good a record as Grauman's. Not only is Fred Miller a master booker, but his Jack Laughlin prologue-Carli Elinor orchestra combination is one that cannot be beaten. His exploitation methods and first night premiers are recognized to be of much importance to the industry. With the Carthay Circle running Loves of Carmen and Sunrise to follow, this theatre is practically tied up for a year by Fox.

With Sid Grauman running Douglas Fairbanks' The Gaucho at his Chinese Theatre, these two road-show houses are completely tied up, while there are many big theatreless attractions that are available now, or that will be in the near future, including such pictures as The Student Prince, The Patent Leather Kid, The Trail of '98, and Uncle Tom's Cabin. Rex Ingram's The Garden of Allah was presented in New York during the early part of October as a road-show attraction at the Embassy Theatre, but during its run it did such a poor business (finally giving place to Marion Davies' production, Quality Street), and it also had such bad criticisms that M.-G.-M. probably will not have the nerve to road-show it throughout the country, but will try to sell it as a special when it really should be a program release.

While The Volga Boatman run lasted but five weeks in New York, the Carthay Circle had a very successful

nineteen week run—practically four times as long. What Price Glory played to twenty-six weeks business as a road-show in both New York and Los Angeles, but the Los Angeles gross for the same period at the Carthay Circle was much larger. What Price Glory got its real break in New York when it grossed four hundred and eight thousand dollars in its three weeks' run at the Roxy. But, of course, it was accompanied by a presentation at this theatre.

Seventh Heaven, accompanied by the Fox movietone, had a poor fifteen week first run in New York, and yet locally, at the Carthay Circle, accompanied by Laughlin's masterful prologue, it played to a strong twenty-three weeks and could have run on another month at a good profit, if it were not for the advanced booking. On the Seventh Heaven run the Carthay Circle averaged \$17,000 weekly against a \$9,000 average weekly gross at the Harris theatre in New York, or almost twice as much.

It is true these road-shows all got \$2.20 top in New York and only \$1.65 top here, yet the weekly gross figures here are all much higher. And still some critics say: "To hell with pro-

logues and presentations!"

While we are not necessarily boosting the way that West Coast are running Grauman's Egyptian, the new West Coast regime, and particularly Harold Franklin, Jack Mansfield and Geoff Lazarus, are to be congratulated on the success they are having with their first run weekly change houses, not only in Los Angeles but also in Fortland, Seattle, and especially San Francisco, where three practically dead houses, the St. Francis, the Cali-

fornia and the Imperial have been brought back to life.

The pooling of the Los Angeles and San Francisco Publix theatres with the West Coast theatres has been a very successful arrangement for all concerned. The Metropolitan in Los Angeles with bigger prologues and booking on the open market has been averaging much better than it ever has before, while Loew's State has been holding fairly well, although the absence of Gene Morgan has certainly cost this house plenty.

Turning the Uptown into a second run house and making the Boulevard the uptown first run house with Abe Lyman as master of ceremonies should prove a good move for the box-office. When Abe was at the Uptown the earlier part of this year the house only averaged \$12,000 weekly, while indications are that he will average a good \$14,000 or \$15,000 weekly gross at the Boulevard, providing West Coast and Louis Golden use good judgment in booking their feature attractions.

The two long-run houses, the Million Dollar and the Criterion, have been holding up very well on the strength of their special features. The Million Dollar is becoming more and more handicapped because of its poor location since this town has taken a notion to grow west of Seventh Street. This, of course, is an aid to the Criterion, which should help make up for the unpopularity of the orchestra leader at that theatre, who has a habit of playing on without applause until he becomes boresome. However, we must give him credit for amusing the film colony on first nights by sending big baskets of flowers to himself!

had varied experiences on top of their newspaper and story training and their knowledge of picture technique, who are ignored. It would be a simple matter for studio executives to avail themselves of this ready talent without any added cost while at the same time encouraging fresh ideas from a source now lying dormant.

There are press agents who are college men; these men can be used to good advantage during the writing and making of a college story. There are press agents who served in the world war; an invitation to them might elicit one worth-while idea, certainly it could do no harm. During their newspaper training these boys have been spectators in many phases



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VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

THE LOWLY PRESS AGENT

Dear Mr. Beaton:

These many years the press agent has been in a state of obloquy. His title has been uttered with contumely and he has generally been considered as something worse than a necessary evil, an unmentionable caudal extremity. But it seems to me that as a whole these gentlemen of the press, who act as mediators between the motion picture industry and the public, are an intelligent and worthy crew. As a class they have done their work as well, and in many cases better, than any other cinematic sect.

A glance at the list of ex-press

A giance at the list of ex-press agents who have risen from the ranks will surprise those individuals who captain the industry's destinies. But being a press agent seems a sort of leprosy and producers never think of them as an intelligent and valuable part of the business. It seems to me that a system, such as used in the army and navy during wartime, whereby the varied and diverse talents of the press agent is used to best advantage, will not only uncover some

much needed talent, but also increase the deplorable lack of studio brains.

If, for example, an artist enters the army, he is placed in the camouflage section; if he is a mathematician he is placed in the artillery; etcetera, etcetera. There are press agents who have been in the motion picture business for many years. They have had ample time to observe and study production. They have seen strange things happen to good stories and they have stood by, inarticulate by force of circumstances, and watched blunders being made. Their very business of press agentry proves that they can write. Many of them were important editors, some of them are now magazine and syndicate writers, and some are novelists; they have a proven story sense and this, plus their experience in the studios, should make them highly useful members of a motion picture making company.

Often a nondescript creature known as a technical director is hired at a high salary and twice as often his advice goes unheeded. There are men in the publicity departments who have

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is writing something or other—I don't know what.

CHARLES KENYON

SCENARIST

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WRITER
DE MILLE STUDIO

6

of life; why not use their writing ability, their picture knowledge, and their particular experience in some walk of life? I can name a dozen men in the press agent ranks who will some day be important contributors to production fields. I can not name any producers who will be wise enough to scour their particular de-partments now and grab them while they can.

JOE STEELE.

GARBLED EUROPE

Dear Mr. Beaton:

The following comments on Twelve Miles Out will serve as an opportunity to point out how the incorrectness of European cities, as shown on the screen, strikes people who know the actual scenes.

The Spanish sequence:

Costumes-The man who fights with Torrence in the Cafe in San Sebastian, looks like an Argentine tango dancer or the foreman of a big Argentine "Gaucho" costume, which is what the Argentine cowboys are called. Some are dressed as Mexicans and others as cowboys of Mexico. The waiter is dressed as though he were waiting in a big Parisian Cafe, when as a matter of fact the cafe as shown is supposed to be very rough and crude.

The man who leaves Torrence at the table to pay the bill, reminds us of a Valencian or a man from the mountain districts by the clothes he wears. A native of the mountainous districts would change his clothing to conform to the city in which he was staying. In fact, this man appears to be one who lived permanently in San Sebastian and not a mountaineer. Then again, one of the girls is dressed as a Neapolitan.

Types-Apparently no regard was paid to casting correctly, as the types appear to follow the rule that as a Spaniard is dark, any dark complexioned person is proper for a Spanish story. As a matter of fact, the men

from this part of Spain are a distinct type, blonde, very husky and good looking, not the light chocolate types that were used, all of whom appeared to be sickly Mexicans. It is a well known fact that the men and women of this district, San Sebastian, are blonde, the men having ruddy complexions.

Sets—The cafe appears to have been an old stock set, used, most likely, in Mexican and South American stories. Nothing typically Spanish appears in it. One thing that would have made it more realistic in a cafe of this type would have been marble topped tables.

According to this story, San Sebastian is a little port situated on the Mediterranean. We could say with as much truth that San Francisco is a small smuggling port on the Atlantic. San Sebastian is located, not on the Mediterranean, but on the "Mar Cantabrico" on the Atlantic. San Sebastian instead of being a small seaport village is one of the most aristocratic beaches in the world The King of Spain goes there for two or three months every year, making it the summer capitol of Spain.

The producer who states that no one will know the difference, should realize that San Sebastian is as fashionably known and visited as Deauville, Biarritz, Nice and the Lido, just outside Venice.

The French, Germans, Italians, people from South America, South Africa, India, and in fact a very

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large number from this country, go there every season.

It would not have been a question of spending more money to have the types, costumes and sets correct, but merely a question of research, the use of a native of Spain and not some American who perhaps spent five hours in Madrid and saw picture postcards of San Sebastian.

The effect on any one seeing a city they know incorrectly depicted, is similar to meeting a bad case of halitosis. Showing the Rocky Mountains in New York Harbor, with Mississippi River steamboats plying up and down the Hudson, or Brooklyn shown as the Sahara Desert would be just as authentic as the way San Sebastian is shown.

This is not the only incorrect picture made by this company showing scenes in Spain. Valencia is another example, which, according to Spanish critics, has nothing in it that looks like Spain.

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It is my ambition to make The Spectator a paper that its readers will support and which will need to depend but little on advertising patronage. To accomplish this the circulation must be large.

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Edited by WELFORD BEATON

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Hollywood, California, December 10, 1927

No. 8

Time to give producers a dose of their own medicine

We point out a few ways in which this can be done

The jobless actor and the foreign film market

Why consult producers about standard contracts?

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He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., DECEMBER 10, 1927

Take It Out of the Producers' Hands

PRODUCERS have made another drastic cut in the salaries of screen actors. Last summer, when they held out that "hand of good fellowship" which the actors clutched so sobbingly, the producers gave their word that they would not reduce salaries. Their action in reducing them twice since that time shows how much they may be relied upon as men of integrity. Screen workers surely recognize by this time that taken collectively the members of the Hays organization are unscrupulous in the conduct of their business, and have no regard whatever for what the decent citizen holds most highly: his word of honor. It is obvious, therefore, that as long as these men continue to dominate pictures the positions of their employees will be unstable and insecure. It is not on moral grounds that a dishonest man is not tolerated in business; it is because he is an unknown quantity, because his unreliability is disturbing to the even tenor of the transactions that he is engaged in, and because his word of honor means nothing to those to whom he pledges it. One of two things must be done to him: he must be eliminated, or he must be forced to conduct his business ethically. Motion picture producers are entrenched too strongly to be eliminated; therefore, if the position of their employees is to be made sufficiently stable to produce happiness and contentment, decency must be forced on the employers. Producers have a perfect right to reduce salaries. They have a right to go into the market and buy talent as cheaply as possible. No one can gainsay that. But what of the man who sells his talent to them? Let us select Blank, who is paying for the home that he and his wife hold dear as the crystalization of their dream. Last June Blank was in a panic until the producers called

IN THE NEXT SPECTATOR

Ten best pictures of the year.

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off the salary cut. At that time he felt his position once more was secure, and he and Mrs. Blank were happy. Then came the first cut. He was forced to adjust himself to it. Having done so, he felt that while he was not as well off as he had been, he at least knew where he stood. Now comes the second cut. He finds that the part for which he formerly received five hundred dollars now pays three hundred. He must take it or leave it. And he has no assurance that he will not be subjected to another upheaval in his personal affairs as soon as he has established them on the restricted basis that the second cut makes necessary. He now realizes that the producers treat him with ruthless disregard for his peace of mind, and he can't help wondering what is going to happen next. There are a few thousand Blanks in Hollywood who felt secure in their positions and who have had their happiness undermined by the action of those for whom they work. In many cases it will mean the loss of homes. Writers, technicians, and directors will be the next to experience the pinch and to have their stability swept from under them. Hollywood is being changed from a city of contented homes to one of unrest and concern. Where is it going to end? Are a handful of despots to continue to inject their own warped conception of decency into their relations with thousands of those who work for them? Is the blacklisting crime to continue to flourish? Are all the studios to be closed to Blank if he protests against the injustice of one of them? Is this Russia, or is it the United States? Must highly cultured men and women, who have scores of millions of friends throughout the world, continue to take whatever crumbs are tossed to them by a body composed principally of uncultured upstarts whom one would not invite to his dinner table? Will a score rule thousands indefinitely? Yes-until the thousands get some sense. That will be when the clamorings of their stomachs alarm their brains. Then they will take the motion picture industry out of the hands of those who control it now.

ART

By GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN

The case is this: Art must accomplish its destiny. It is a force, constantly augmented by every triumph it achieves. Its genesis lay in the first picture drawn in a paleolithic cave, the first nebulous desire for something better. Every noble aspiration in the world is its sponsor, and appreciation fans the forge of its genius 'till the Art that was is wrought into the art that is to be. It is the inviolable law of Life. We can not forget the finest things we have experienced, nor can we be satisfied with mediocrity when we know the potentialities latent in any endeavor. Having glimpsed the beatitudes of Seventh Heaven, can we find sanctuary in our hearts for the vulgarities of What Price Glory or The Loves of Carmen? No! Art has attained another milestone —a Romney portrait contrasts the gaudy chromo and we who pay our dollars will not be cheated. We know the spurious from the genuine for we have a

standard of comparison. And we are a Roman populace with thumbs down for the inefficient. Out with them!

Give Producers Dose of Their Own Medicine

RODUCERS are making it uncomfortable for their employees. The way to hit back is to make it uncomfortable for the employers. As I said in the previous paragraph, what can not be eliminated must be reformed. Reformation should be forced on the producers, and they should not be consulted as to the method of its application. It should be quite rough, for heaven knows they are treating their employees roughly enough. Producers should be subjected to the "take it or leave it" system. An eight-hour day and equitable contracts should be forced on them. The czar thought he was a powerful figure in Russia until the majority of Russians showed him that he was not. Our little peanut czars should be shown. The power is in the hands of those whom they now are treating as serfs. For six years screen writers, those whose brains make the whole industry possible, have been begging humbly for ordinarily decent treatment. They have waited for this half dozen years for a standard contract that would be as fair to them as to the producers. Why should they wait longer? What is to prevent them drawing up such a contract and saying to the producers, "Take it or leave it"? It is what the writers should do. Actors have many abuses forced on them. They, too, humbly crawl on their bellies looking for crumbs. When are they going to develop sufficient manhood to remedy their own ills? Why should they consult their bosses? They have been endeavoring to secure a contract founded on decency and justice. What is to prevent them drawing one up and declaring their intention of sticking to it? What could the producers do? They can not make pictures without actors. The producers do not need to agree to live up to the terms of the contract. Their promise would be no good, and, anyway, they should be given no alternative. Directors also should apply whatever pressure is needed to make their positions more secure. All screen workers favor the establishment of a forty-four hour week. They should establish it. Again the producers should not be consulted. Why should they? they consult the actors when they cut salaries? present insane system of working night and day can not continue indefinitely. Too many people will crack under it. The producers themselves and their executives should be the most insistent champions of shorter hours. By the time he is thirty-five, when a man is still a score of years shy of his prime, Irving Thalberg will be an old man, with most of his usefulness behind him. Two years more of work under the high pressure he now maintains will leave Ben Schulberg burned out. Before he is forty Johnnie Considine will be through, and it is the same all the way down the line. Yet these men will tell you that the hours that every other industry on earth finds it economically wise to observe can not be applied to the picture business. It is weird reasoning. Long hours ultimately mean short profits, a fact that is accepted by all capable business men. Producers can not be made to realize it by any method other than having it forced on them, and if I had the power that actors, writers, directors and technicians have I would inaugurate the eight-hour system next week, with a four-hour day on Saturday. And I would draw up the kind of contracts that screen workers want, and I would thrust them under the noses

of the producers and make a speech in which I would use quite a lot of Louis B. Mayer's vocabulary to give emphasis to the things I would say, things that would impress the producers with the fact that hereafter the industry was to be conducted in a decent and sane way and that if they didn't like it they'd have to lump it, for they had no alternative. However, I don't happen to have the power. But the actors, directors, writers, technicians—all those who work in pictures—have it, and if they do not exercise it I will lose all my respect for their common sense.

How to Settle All the Problems

ORCING the producers to observe ordinary decency in the treatment of their employees would be ridiculously easy. The incomes of both American and foreign actors already in Hollywood are threatened by the continued invasion of foreigners whom producers, in the hope of further reducing salaries, encourage to come and to many of whom they give lucrative contracts. It is a serious question, and actors now are giving some thought to it. But what can they do about it? Will Hays is stronger at Washington than they are, and producers will lie about it as they lied about their intention to cut salaries. But how simply it can be settled! Organize your actors and have as one of the rules of the organization that no Equity actor could work in a picture in which there was working any actor who had been in the United States for less than twelve months. Organize your writers and no Guild member would sell a story to a producer who did not observe all the Equity rules. Organize your directors, and none of them would direct a picture that did not conform to the demands of Equity and the Guild. No actor would work in a picture directed by any but an organization director, and neither actor nor director would have anything to do with it unless the story for it were written by a Guild member. What could the producer do? He would be as helpless as actors, directors and writers are now. The producer will plead that any agitation against the admission of foreign artists will react abroad against the marketing of American pictures there. What comfort is the flourishing condition of the foreign market to the hungry stomach of the American actor who can not get work because there has been no agitation against the inflow of foreigners? Should he continue to starve merely to add to the profits of those responsible for his condition? Poppycock! If the producers were half-way honest and intelligent they would be turning out pictures which in themselves would protect the foreign market by being the kind of pictures that the foreigners would buy. If I were an actor and had the power I would smash the whole foreign market before I would lose my home or allow my wife and children to suffer. Only when he has done everything he can for the actor is it up to the actor to do everything he can for the producer. The business of the moment is for the actor, and the writer and the director to do everything he can TO the producer, not FOR him. I have given above only a brief hint of what screen workers can do to improve their positions if they wield the power they now have. There are scores of abuses that they can correct without consulting the producers. Florence Turner is one of the women of whom

the screen should be proud. She was a great star when the industry indeed was in its infancy, and she is a talented actress yet. She was employed to play a part in an F. B. O. picture. She was not given a contract, but was told to be on the set at nine one morning. This was after she had made half a dozen trips to the studio and had had tests made for make-up. Ten minutes before nine she was leaving her dressing-room for the stage, when an office boy came to her and told her to pack up and go, as there had been a misunderstanding. I have before me a copy of a most courteous letter she wrote F. B. O. asking if all the trouble she had gone to on the assumption that she had been employed in good faith were not worth at least two days' pay. Of course she received no reply. Why should she? She's only an actress, and if she raises a howl she'll be blacklisted, so why the devil bother about her? But actors and actresses stand for it! Under intelligent leadership they could be organized in sixty days and could be dictating terms to the producers, who would be powerless to resist them. By joining hands with directors and writers they can stabilize conditions until they can see farther ahead than the ends of their noses, and bring peace of mind again to Hollywood. But the leadership must be wise. The organizations must demand only what is fair and just. As long as they are reasonable The Spectator is for them all the way down the line. When they become unreasonable The Spectator will be against them just as heartily.

Producers Trying to Eliminate Big Names

-HERE are some actors, writers, and directors who realize what they could do if organized, and when the same realization penetrates the dull consciousness of the others it will mark the dawn of the emancipation of screen workers. The hardest people to stir are those who have comfortable contracts. They do not see what they could gain by stirring things up. I can understand their view, but I believe it is based on faulty reasoning. They can be fired at the end of any six months period, and are not being kept under contract because the producers love them. At the time contract actors are saying that producers should be treated with consideration, representatives of the producers are visiting all parts of the country urging exhibitors to assist the makers of pictures in developing new talent in order to permit of cheaper pictures, the presumption being that the producers will pay the new talent less than they are paying the present headliners. In other words, while the producers are soft-soaping their present stars they are doing all they can to hasten the time when they can turn them loose and put cheaper people in their places. And the stars are standing aloof from their fellows because they can not realize that there is any probability of their status enanging. They really are the ones who should head the organization movement by becoming members of Equity. Sometimes I have a feeling that battling for the rights of screen people is a thankless task that will lead nowhere, for collectively they are the dumbest and most selfish creatures I ever rubbed elbows with. Among them are cultured and brilliant people whom it is a delight to associate with, but the majority are hopeless asses without brains enough to realize their position or energy enough

to do anything to improve it. Certainly it is not my intention to devote the pages of The Spectator to them forever. I can not keep on pointing out reasons why they should organize long after quite sufficient have been advanced to convince anyone that there was a prospect of being able to convince. When I criticized them for their action in repudiating Equity last summer I was laboring under a wrong impression. I thought their vote was against joining Equity, but I am informed that it was against the immediate adoption of Equity shop. Under the circumstances I approve the action and am convinced that Conrad Nagel's oratory was used to good advantage in that it averted too hasty action on something that should be done only after much deliberation. Equity shop as it is applied to the speaking stage can not in its entirety be applied to pictures. It must be made over to suit Hollywood conditions. All that should have been done at the time of the salary cut rumpus was the enrolling of all actors as members of Equity, a step that was advocated earnestly by Nagel, but which the actors, in their folly, refused to take. If all those who were present at the meeting had joined Equity that night practically all the troubles of the actors would be over by this time. The impression seems to exist that there is little to be gained by free lance players joining until the contract players have enrolled themselves. I do not agree with this view. When Equity has grown strong enough to deliver its ultimatum to the producers its members then can adopt Equity shop and refuse to work in pictures in which the casts are not composed wholly of Equity members. No producing organization can make pictures in which none but its contract players appear, hence the producers themselves would be forced to see that all the members of their stock companies became members of Equity. Thus it becomes the first duty of every player to join Equity, and the Hollywood branch would have to declare itself free of the domination of the Eastern governing body while retaining affiliation with it. The problems here are not the problems of the East, and those of pictures differ from those of the stage. When Equity membership includes the majority of screen actors a form of Equity shop applicable to pictures should be adopted, and the producers should not be consulted when it was being rammed down their throats.

Academy Can Be Powerful Weapon

TE MUST not overlook the fact that in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences screen workers have at hand a weapon that could be used to their advantage. I have that in mind when I urge the personnel of the industry to organize. At present the various branches are represented on the board of directors of the Academy, but they have no militant bodies at their backs. The producers realize this. That is why they are themselves members of the Academy and explains the fact that they dominate it. To whom can the actors on the board appeal for support in advocating the adoption of a reform by the Academy? What weight have they behind them when they advocate anything? None. But let the actors be organized thoroughly, and let the organization stand back of its representatives on the Academy board and something can be accomplished. The writers on the

board have the Guild behind them, but the Guild is not powerful enough yet to make its support impressive. The directors and technicians have nothing behind them. The producers are the only ones properly organized, and up to date they have used the Academy to serve their own ends. "Variety" reports that Eastern executives have not supported the Academy because they can not see how the producers can be benefited by joining an organization they can not rule. I insisted from the first that such would be the producer view. "Variety" further states that the Western producers joined it solely to avoid a state of anarchy in the industry. I hope they will not be successful. A large dose of legal anarchy is what the industry needs, and for the past few months I have been using The Spectator in an effort to produce it. The producers also are doing their best to achieve the same end. Perhaps between us we will get results. On the board of directors of the Academy the producers are out-voted four to one. With complete organizations, sane and well governed, behind the four, the Academy could be relied upon to support every reform that would benefit screen workers. Any such reform would benefit producers also, for they would be the first to profit from improved conditions, but they can not see it, and when they ceased to rule the Academy they would resign from it and repudiate it. Nothing is more certain than this, for they are yellow, and yellow people act that way. But to the outside world the Academy would be the biggest thing in pictures and it should give widespread publicity to everything that concerned it, including the fact that the producers refused to abide by its decisions after pledging their word that they would. By that time I hope The Spectator will have such a large exhibitor circulation that it can keep the majority of the exhibitors informed of what is going on. When I started my compaign for exhibitor circulation I insisted that the greatest weapon screen workers could have would be a paper advocating their cause among those who buy the producers' pictures. A large number of picture people seem to agree with me, for the response has been large, but there are still many who have not responded. The Spectator is the only absolutely independent motion picture paper published, and I do not think I am over-estimating its progress when I say that already it is the most influential. Certainly it is quoted more often in Europe than all other American publications combined. Where it can do screen workers the most good, however, is among exhibitors, for their good will is a matter of vast importance to producers, who would grant a reform rather than have exhibitors know they refused to do so. Therefore the more exhibitor circulation The Spectator has the greater value it is to any cause it supports. Giving it exhibitor circulation is in the hands of those whose cause it now is supporting.

Trades Unionism Should Be Applied

NE weapon that can be used effectively to club producers into some appreciation of the economic value of decency is trades unionism. Already by virtue of its affiliation with the American Federation of Labor those actors who belong to Equity have the moral support of five million members of unions. Directors, writers and technicians should have the same affiliation. I never have

fancied unionism myself, perhaps because I know so little about it, but when I contemplate the Hays organization and find it to be one of the most perfectly functioning unions in existence I realize the futility of trying to combat it with any weapon other than the one that it has fashioned for itself and which it wields with such ruthless disregard for any interests other than its own. Nothing that could happen within the industry could make the positions of actors, writers, directors and technicians more insecure than they are now, so nothing could be lost to the creative branches if they gave solid support to any movement to thoroughly unionize the studios. It would be a retributive act that would be justified, and it would have a salutary effect on producers. But it is not merely as a social and economic movement that I see the value of organized screen workers affiliating with the American Federation of Labor. I see in it an instrument that could be used to promote better production conditions and to provide more work for actors, writers, and directors, and at the same time to make them independent of the producers who now treat them with so little consideration. There are throughout the country about fifteen hundred labor temples. All of them have halls that seat hundreds of people each. The backbone of unionism is the loyalty that exists between the different unions. Pictures made by groups affiliated with them would receive their hearty and consistent support. Every labor hall could be made a moving picture theatre. Supply union towns with unionmade pictures and they would show no others in the regular picture houses. At a conservative estimate a union-made picture would have as outlets five thousand halls and theatres. The unions quickly would organize their own distributing organization, and with their present machinery as a basis for it would conduct it efficiently at a trivial cost. They would support such a movement so heartily that they would assemble funds that would permit them to finance productions in advance. They would not insist upon union propaganda pictures for they know that their own members would not support such pictures. Like the rest of us, union members want entertainment, not preachment. Producers now are turning loose players with established reputations because they realize that the players have no alternative to working for them at any terms offered them. Give these players another outlet by which they can reach the public, such an outlet as the unions can provide, and it would be comical to watch the producers crawling on their bellies to those whom they now spurn. From time to time reports come to the surface that unions are considering making pictures. Now is the time to bring this movement to a head. There are available hundreds of people skilled in every branch of screen art. They can make pictures that would be tremendously profitable if they received no support in addition to that which the unions could provide. But that would not be all the support they would receive. They would be shown eventually all over the country according to their merits. If it came to a showdown the unions themselves would insist upon this. Operators and musicians are organized throughout the United States. Give them enough unionmade pictures of merit and they would use their strike proclivities as a weapon to force their showing. To all screen workers I commend the plan as one they should encourage.

Nothing in This of Great Importance

 HE Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has published the first issue of its magazine. It is all art and no science. As a sample of typographical craftsmanship it is a gorgeous success. It is more imposing than an invitation to the wedding of a crown prince, and it is so strong in sex appeal that merely withdrawing it from its envelope made me blush. Its motif is one of repressed passion. A silken cord of golden hue holds together its impressive pages. The only defect is that it isn't scented. I was smoking my pipe and wearing a sweater when it arrived, and was conscious immediately that I was not the proper type to do its contents full justice. I put down my pipe, borrowed a pink negligee from Mrs. Spectator, garbed myself in it, powdered my nose and read the magazine from beginning to end. It contains excellent articles by Rupert Hughes, Ralph Block, Waldemar Young, and Barney Glazer. They are excellent, but they have nothing to do with the Academy and in all four there is not one idea of value to motion pictures. There is an opening and enlightening statement by President Douglas Fairbanks, some well written and pungent editorials, much too brief, some amusing odds and ends, and the Academy membership list. I don't see what possible good is to be accomplished by the publication of such a magazine. Its get-up is ridiculous. I am aware that the Academy has a great deal of money, but why waste it in making a bulletin look like a bride? A publication of some sort is necessary to acquaint the industry with what is being done, but it is not necessary to print it on expensive paper and to use silken cord to hold its pages together. And its contents should deal with Academy activities. I was entertained pleasantly by the article by Rupert Hughes, but I would like to know why under the sun the Academy spent its money setting it up so expansively and printing it so expensively. Is the Academy to supply its members with their general reading? And are all its expenditures to be made with the same ostentatious extravagance? A small, neat, businesslike bulletin dealing solely with what the Academy is doing is all that the Academy needs. If it wants to save all the money that a bulletin would cost I would be glad to have it use regularly one or two pages of The Spectator for the dissemination of its news. Of course, I'd be astonished if it accepted the invitation, but it isn't such a bad idea. If I might make a suggestion regarding the Academy's editorial policy, it would be that it does not stress the point that it prevented the cut in salaries last June. All that the Academy did in that connection was to force the producers to change their method of cutting salaries. In the beginning they were going to do it honestly and with all their cards on the table. When the Academy intervened the producers withdrew their cards and played the game out in secret. The fact that salaries have been cut is the best proof that the

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Academy did not prevent them being cut. In the first number of its magazine it boasts that it did, which, under the circumstances, is not a wise boast to make.

Many Laughs in Charlie's Latest

EING his first since The Gold Rush, Charlie Chaplin's The Circus will suffer by comparison with its predecessor. The Gold Rush was a great picture on account of the deep human vein that stretched between the comedy high spots, and there was a sweep to the production that raised it almost to the level of an epic. We had a right to assume that it signified Charlie's farewell to slapstick and that thereafter the human note would be stressed in all pictures and that their settings would be on a broad and comprehensive scale. To the extent that we held such expectation we will be disappointed with The Circus, for its greatest sweep is within the borders of a circus lot and its human note is more implied than stressed. The Circus is a good picture, one of the best Charlie has made, and his reputation as an actor, producer, author, and director will not suffer by it, but to enjoy it to the utmost you must forget The Gold Rush and close your mind to the exquisite tenderness of The Kid. These two pictures taught us what Chaplin can do, but in his last offering he reverts to what we knew he could do before he made the others. There is much rich comedy in The Circus, but it lacks such a screamingly funny sequence as that of the rocking house in The Gold Rush. There are many directorial and acting gems in it, and from a motion picture standpoint these features are above criticism. In one scene showing Charlie in a cage with a lion his acting is brilliant. Every moment he is on the screen is a treat to the audience. His extraordinary pantomimic powers show increased development with each succeeding picture. All the comedy hits in the picture have their place in the unwinding of the story. In that respect The Circus might well serve as a model for such comedies. Also it might serve as a valuable lesson in direction. Charlie commits none of the standard faults that we find in nearly all other pictures. He knows the value of medium and long shots as opposed to close-ups, and resorts to the latter but seldom. He knows also that the way to create sympathy for a character is to show him as a small creature in a big setting, and he does not resort to mugging to gain sympathy for himself. In one scene, in which he urges Harry Crocker to marry the girl that he (Charlie) loves, he does not face the camera. During most of the scene we see the back of his head, and in the rest of it we see only the side of his face. But his failure to make the most of the opportunities to build up sympathy for himself is the greatest weakness of the picture. His appearance is not as pathetic as usual, and the fact that he loves the girl is not stressed sufficiently. There are none of the charming one-sided love scenes that made The Gold Rush notable. In fact, I am not sure that I would have gathered from the picture itself that Charlie loved the bare-back rider. Before I saw it Charlie outlined the story to me, consequently I was aware of the love element, and knowing it was there, I recognized it. I doubt if audiences will grasp it sufficiently to give point to Charlie's sacrifice in the end when he recognizes that the girl is not for him and brings to her the man she loves. Charlie is the tramp again. He

comes from nowhere, is forced by circumstances to enter circus life, has a glorious romance, the circus moves on and leaves him sitting in the deserted ring, watching the wagons disappearing in the distance. It is a beautiful ending to a picture that will rate high, even though it will be felt that such a great artist could have done something greater. Merna Kennedy, the girl of the picture, will prove to be another of Charlie's gifts to the screen. She is beautiful, natural and talented. Harry Crocker, Henry Gergman and Allen Garcia contribute good performances. Charlie's titles are models of what titles should be. They are brief and simple, and confine themselves to telling the story.

Ruth Taylor Is One Blonde Whom Gentlemen Will Prefer

-HOSE who read Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, the book, will be disappointed in the picture made from it; those who have not read the book will find the picture uninteresting. It is a faithful recital of the exploits of the little gold-digger as set forth in the book, but it does not sparkle as the book does, and it builds no sympathy for anyone in it. When I read the book I was beguiled so much by the sheer artistry of Lorelei's methods that I wanted to see her turn up gold every time she dug. When I watched her on the screen her methods seemed so crude that it was a matter of indifference to me whether she succeeded or not. The book interested me because it is a superb example of humorous writing and an extremely clever, searching analysis of the character of a fascinating girl with but one idea in her head. The action of the written story contributed nothing to its entertainment as reading, its attraction being the manner in which it was set forth. In the picture we have the action stripped of its garb of scintillating humor, and there is nothing in the action, even when we visualize it, to hold our interest for seven reels. In the book Lorelei puts over her deal for the diamond tiara with fascinating subtlety; in the picture she merely asks the Englishman for the money, and the scene in which she does it does not develop sufficiently to make it reasonable for the Englishman to give it to her. He is not established as being the easy mark he proves to be. But Paramount is to be commended for the effort it made. It is what might be called an honest picture. It has put the book on the screen as faithfully as possible, and Anita Loos, the original author, wrote for it some clever titles. And it cast Ruth Taylor as Lorelei. When Ruth talks salary with Paramount she will be reminded that she was given her chance to demonstrate her value, which will be advanced as a reason why she should accept but a fraction of it as salary. Instead of demanding gratitude, Paramount should offer it to the superb little creature it was lucky enough to secure. Whatever success Gentlemen Prefer Blondes meets with, and it will be considerable, will be due to Ruth Taylor, not to the story, the direction, or the supporting cast. She is a find. I will be surprised if she ever develops the range of expression of Dolores del Rio and Janet Gaynor, the other finds of the year, but as a delineator of ingenuous precocity she will reign supreme. When I've said she makes a perfect Lorelei I've said it all. She has great beauty and personality, a combination that spells success. I would judge from the care that was exercised to avoid photographing her profile that such shots of her would not be as attractive as those to which we are treated in the picture, but they could be a lot less attractive and still be treats to the eye. Some of her close-ups are breath-taking in their beauty. The very first one will hit you right between the eyes and make you her slave. But do not get the impression that she is of the beautiful-but-dumb type. She has brains, and plays her part with as much ease as if she had a score of years of experience behind her. This picture, of course, will make her, but she will reciprocate handsomely by making the picture, which relieves her of the necessity of feeling so grateful to Paramount that she will allow it to retain the greater portion of what should go to her in the way of salary. Another fine bit of casting is that of Alice White as Dorothy. She and Ruth make a pair that might have stepped from the book. Miss Loos must have had the two of them in mind. Alice is a clever girl. In this picture she is the wise-cracking gold-digger to the life, but she reveals a talent that would indicate that she is not in anyway limited to that kind of characterization. She is astonishingly like Clara Bow in appearance, and I would not be at all surprised if she ultimately will not go farther than Clara.

Nothing Notable About Direction

-HERE are other excellent performances in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes. As I said in the previous paragraph, it is an honestly made picture. Paramount exercised the greatest care in casting and filled each part perfectly. Whether the public, with its preconceptions derived from the book, will accept all the characterizations is another matter. Certainly I can not understand what Paramount was thinking of when it decided upon the characterizations of Sir Francis and Lady Beekman. In this country Mack Swain and Emily Fitzroy will be immensely popular in the parts, and will be responsible for many laughs, but wait until the picture reaches England! There is one shot so obviously a caricature of Queen Mary and the hats she wears that it will raise such a storm of protest that I predict the picture will be withdrawn, even if it be shown at all. Imagine if a picture made in England and containing a scene reflecting on the good taste of Mrs. Coolidge, were shown in this country. We would resent it. Well, multiply the resentment by one hundred and you have an idea of how England will receive Emily Fitzroy's characterization. America is having a struggle to retain the European market, and it is the height of folly to send over pictures that will aggravate the existing prejudice against our productions. Swain's characterization will not be popular in England either. There was no reason why it should have been drawn so broadly. It is an excellent performance, though. Ford Sterling is an admirable Eisman. It is another character that might have stepped from the book. Holmes Herbert, as the millionaire whom Lorelei finally lands as a husband, is entirely adequate. Trixie Friganza's characterization as a poor, demented old woman is clever, but it adds a melancholy note to the picture. There is nothing notable about the direction of Mal St. Clair. Farther along in this Spectator you will read my praise of St. Clair's direction of Breakfast at Sunrise. Whatever merit that picture has is due to the direction. Whatever merit Gentlemen Prefer Blondes has is in spite

of the direction. I would have assumed that the Loos story was one made to order for St. Clair, but he directs it as almost any of our established directors, not so skilled in his particular line, might have directed it. It is just ordinary direction, with no inspiration back of it. One variety of fault that gadually is getting on my nerves is committed frequently. It is the common one of lining up characters facing the camera. It is crude direction. I have said it many times and I repeat it: two people conversing with one another do not stand shoulder to shoulder. They face one another. When three people stand and converse they form a triangle. No scene showing them standing in any other formation is convincing. The greatest crime that St. Clair commits is in a scene showing Ruth, Alice and Sterling lunching in a cafe. They are at a round table, and are fairly glued together-and leaving about three-quarters of the space at the table unoccupied. St. Clair groups them that way to make all of them face the camera, which is inexcusable direction. No scene that betrays a consciousness of the position of the camera is a good scene. The three people at the small round table should have been seated in a triangle, not in one straight line and so close together that they do not have elbow room. Another fault of the picture is the over-indulgence in close-ups. There is one scene that is ruined by them. It shows Herbert confronting Sterling in Ruth's room. It is one of the high spots of the picture, and gains its strength solely from the reaction of the players to one another, consequently all the players should be in it all the time. But it is cut into fast flickering close-ups, each one of which shows but one-third of the scene. Swain, depicting a titled Englishman, enters the room of Lorelei and Dorothy and does not remove his hat. More inexcusable direction. Swain is presented as a silly ass, but even silly asses who have achieved sufficiently to be knighted learn somewhere along the line that it is customary to remove your hat when you enter a drawing room and address women.

Trying to Delouse "Sadie Thompson"

THEN Loves of Carmen opened at Carthay Circle "Variety" announced that it would run for thirteen weeks. I announced that it would run six weeks. It closes after a run of seven weeks, doing in that time about six weeks of satisfactory business. What Price Glory? occupied the same screen for twenty-four weeks. The success of Glory throughout the world no doubt gave the Fox people the impression that Carmen would be equally successful, for both pictures were by the same director and contain about the same amount of vulgarity. Producers are prone to attribute a picture's success or failure to something in it that really has nothing to do with the public's reception of it. You still hear that the failure of The Last Laugh to click was on account of its lack of titles, whereas the real reason was because the American public refuses to become enthusiastic over a picture in which a uniform is the hero. Winnie Sheehan undoubtedly attributed Glory's success to the disgusting scenes in it, because they were its features that pleased him most, consequently he followed it with Carmen, which is disgusting for its entire length. Glory was a departure as a war picture which gave us the rawest and crudest

aspect of the conflict, and in spite of its vulgarity it ran for twenty-four weeks at the Carthay Circle. Carmen has no such background. It deals with two people, neither of whom awakens either our sympathy or respect, and it runs for seven weeks, which we may accept as the supreme drawing power of unadorned Rabelaisian vulgarity. United Artists, with a false opinion of the box-office value of coarseness, secured Walsh to direct Sadie Thompson, a picture that required most discriminating direction to make it passable. The story itself is so full of censorable pitfalls that it should have been placed in the hands of a director skilled in avoiding them, not of one whose propensity is to make them deeper and more ugly. Instead of the kind of director that the story needed, one of fine instincts, culture and good taste, Raoul Walsh, whose obsession is that the public is degenerate, directed the picture and turned out one that the United Artists people had the greatest difficulty in cleansing sufficiently to make it fit to be released. A picture that has to be put through such a delousing process as Sadie Thompson was subjected to can not emerge as a good example of screen art. In removing the filth it is not possible to avoid scraping off some of the healthy substance. I feel sorry for Gloria Swanson, so sorry that I hope I am wrong in my deductions. She is a talented actress, one of our few really good ones, and she needs a smashing success to give her the standing with the public that her ability entitles her to, but which a succession of poor pictures has robbed her of. It is unfortunate for her that she was persuaded to accept Walsh as her director. Even if the picture retains some of its vigor after being disinfected, enough of the coarseness of its treatment will stick to it to damage her with the public, just as Carmen is damaging Dolores del Rio. The public does not differentiate completely between a character and the person who plays it, and we humans are so uncharitable that we prefer to attribute to the player the personality of the most unlovely character she plays. Quite apart from a consideration of good taste, it is the greatest economic folly to peddle rottenness to shoppers for screen entertainment. The producers who chafe under the restraint of censorship have only themselves to blame for it. The Loves of Carmen is a greater argument in favor of it than any Will Hays can advance against it.

Helping "Variety" to Spread a Scandal

ARIETY" has an amusing habit of writing things about people whom it is afraid to name. "A certain producer" and "a well know star" are only a couple of its favorite expressions that flourish principally on its "Inside Stuff on Pictures". As I read this department I often wonder how much truth there is in the things it says. At last I've had a chance to decide for myself. I quote from "Variety" of November sixteenth:

"The publisher of a semi-monthly paper on the coast recently went to a preview of a picture made by a star of long standing. After seeing the preview, the editor sent a copy of his review to the actress, with a letter stating the review would appear in his next issue. A few days later, the editor managed to be at the star's studio and again told her how well he liked the picture. It was suggested that copies of the paper containing the review be sent to various people throughout the coun-

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try, and the actress turned the editor over to her publicity man to make the arrangements. As a result, the publisher sold 500 copies of the issue at the regular price. He also tried to have the studio turn over the mailing list for him to look after sending out the copies, but the studio publicity man refused. A banner line on the front page calling attention to the review was given the picture, with the banner occupying top position over all others. The editor tried to sell extra copies to a coast producer along the same line recently but the producer turned him down."

The publisher is myself, the publication is The Spectator, the star is Mary Pickford, the picture is My Best Girl, the publicity man is Mark Larkin. Now let's see how "Variety" garbled the truth in its usual cowardly manner. It will help to enable us to decide how much truth there is in all such statements in "Variety". Miss Pickford asked me to look at her picture. After I had seen it I ran across Mark Larkin who asked me what I thought of it. I told him that I thought it was the best picture Mary ever had made. He asked me if my review would make that state. ment. I said it would. Then and there he ordered five hundred copies of the paper that would contain the review. It was a great compliment to The Spectator that Mark would order the papers without first having read the review, something he probably would not do with any other motion picture paper published anywhere. question of distribution was discussed and I suggested that if it would help any I would mail the individual copies if he gave me his mailing list. Finally he decided to ship all The Spectators to New York and let the office there distribute them. When the proof of my review came from the printer I thought that perhaps Mary would like to read it in advance, consequently I sent it to her. This was one week after the papers had been ordered. Miss Pickford had nothing to do with ordering them, and, as a matter of fact, I hadn't either. It was Mark Larkin's own idea and it brought me one hundred dollars, which gave me the opinion that Mark is the greatest publicity man on earth. As the review was written before the order was entered there was no relation between what I said and what I ultimately received for saying it. And it gave me a great idea. Why not more of the same kind of money when I reviewed a picture that I was genuinely enthusiastic over? I thought Symphony was a great picture and told Sam Jacobson out at Universal that I was going to say so. I tried to wheedle him into buying a few million Spectators, but he wouldn't buy any, which gave me the opinion that Sam is the worst publicity man on earth. But the enthusiastic review was published just the same. I sent Doug an advance copy of my Gaucho review and he didn't order a single extra copy, something that I am going to mention to him freezingly the next time I have lunch with him. It is funny that "Variety", the greatest grafting journal on earth, should make veiled insinuations about my efforts to sell Spectators. What the devil does it suppose I print them for? It is my only source of revenue as I do not graft on the motion picture industry with 'special numbers.

I made guesses as to the local runs of three pictures, Don Juan, King of Kings, and Loves of Carmen. I was not more than a week out of the way on any of them. To give myself a chance to go wrong I will make a guess that The Gauchco will run for fourteen weeks at Grauman's Chinese theatre.

Why Pick on Jesse James?

TUST how I escaped it I do not know, but I never was a worshipper of Jesse James. Nick Carter supplied me with a list of heroes more to my liking, and I can not remember that I ever read much about Mr. James. This confession of ignorance is by way of explaining why I am not equipped to challenge Fred Thompson's characterization of the well known criminal. But basing my estimate of him as a citizen on what the screen story reveals, I can see nothing in his career that justifies giving him that degree of immortality that the screen accords those whom it makes its heroes. Why is it necessary to select a desperado notorious only for his infractions of the law, when our history is dotted with the names of such picturesque characters as Patrick Henry, Daniel Boone, Sam Houston, Dave Crockett, Fighting Joe Hooker, Walker, the filibuster; Bowie, who gave his name to a knife, and scores of others who have something worthy to their credit? The picture Jesse James makes a labored attempt to justify the actions of its hero, but does not succeed. The fact that his mother was the victim of some over-zealous partizans during the Civil War did not justify James in robbing banks and holding up trains. His sole claim to fame was that he was a criminal, and it is not to the credit of the screen that it tries to make that fame imperishable. Given such a bad record to start with, too much footage has to be devoted to whitewashing him into a semblance of a hero. But accepting the theme, we find that the picture has little merit, even though it does not contain as many improbabilities as have the other Thompson pictures that I have seen. Of course we have the usual guns that can be fired incessantly without reloading, but that has become the trademark of pictures in which our Western heroes appear. In Jesse James we are given the impression that men on foot have no difficulty in keeping up with a furiously running horse, but that probably is a fault of editing, and not of direction. But Lloyd Ingraham's direction is not free from crudities. An instance: Thompson is shown in a scene disguised as a musician. Two men enter, speak the title, "Jesse James will not dare to set his foot in this town again", and walk off. It is very mechanical. Montague Love, again reverting to the standard heavy which it must bore him to play, sets a trap for Thompson. The outlaw is lured to a conference at which it is Love's intention to have someone

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shoot him. Instead of having him shot as soon as he arrives, the scene is dragged out interminably purely for motion picture purposes. I am aware, of course, if someone had plugged him there would have been no more picture, but well made pictures should not contain situations which lay them open to such a criticism. One of the best features of Jesse James is an excellent performance by William Courtright, veteran character man. Nora Lane is charming, but too immature for the part she plays. I can not imagine such a girl in love with a desperate outlaw. The very idea of it would scare her to death. When I see these slips of girls in pictures, I wonder how producers can continue to overlook obvious possibilities for strengthening their productions. Jesse James is supposed to be a virile drama of the outdoors. If a story part had been written in for a trouper like Blanche Sweet or Bessie Love the picture could have been immeasurably better. Producers are convinced so strongly that we wish to gaze upon pretty faces that they overlook the fact that occasionally we might like a little acting. One fault of pictures is that the wealth of acting ability available to them is not utilized.

"Forbidden Woman" Has Lots of Merit

HE first thing that impresses you as you view The Forbidden Woman is the businesslike manner in which Paul Stein plants the story. He uses a few scenes as an etcher might use a few strokes to sketch in a background. Before half a reel is run off we know what the picture is about. The story moves swiftly, skipping nonessentials and pausing only long enough over the essentials to let us know they are essential, until it brings together the three main characters. Then it slows up sufficiently to take advantage of its dramatic possibilities. On the whole, it is a very good picture. It contains some excellent acting by Jetta Goudal, Victor Varconi and Joseph Schildkraut, the featured players, as well as a pleasantly smooth performance by Albert Conti, one of the most talented actors we have in pictures. I presume that if he had been in the De Mille stock company he would have been given screen credit. Stein's direction is very good. He displays both understanding and excellent taste in handling one sequence that with less intelligent treatment would have made the picture run foul of the censors in most states. A man enters the stateroom of a woman, embraces her, and remains with her all night. It is essential to the story, and later is responsible for some strong drama that lifts the picture above the average. If it were cut out there would be no story, consequently it was up to the director to do it in a way that would offend no one. Stein succeeds admirably. The moon on the water and the strains of the violin in the hands of a master lend a poetic quality to the sequence from the first; and the effective manner in which it is acted by Shildkraut and Miss Goudal rob it of suggestiveness, even though in its essentials it is about as suggestive as a screen scene could be. I have written frequently that anything can be put on the screen if it be done properly, and this sequence in The Forbidden Woman is a good demonstration of what I mean. Another feature that I like is that at no time during the unfoldment of the story is the ending obvious. Not until the very end did I have any idea how it was

going to end. And when it does end it is with a dramatic smash that in itself would make the picture uncommonly good. Under our star system we do not often see in the same picture two such artists as Varconi and Schildkraut playing parts of equal prominence. Both are sympathetic, the picture having no heavy, and they participate in several strongly dramatic scenes. There are several features of the production that detract from it. Varconi does not hear a window directly over his head break, but a moment later he overhears through a heavy door a conversation between two people who are locked in each other's arms and who stand as far from the door as the room will permit. By no possibility could be have failed to hear the window break, and it would have been impossible for him to hear the conversation, but we have both impossibilities. It would have been reasonable for him to have registered that he heard the break and to have opened the door far enough to hear the voices. To give the impression that Schildkraut is a spy, Jetta sends a message to the enemy's camp. In a subsequent engagement two enemy soldiers are captured and the message is found on one of them. It is preposterous to ask us to accept such a situation. Headquarters would not have given the message to a soldier, for there was no reason why he should have it, and, in any case, how did Jetta know that any particular soldier, knowing nothing of her plot, would be captured? Another queer thing is how a carrier pigeon, bought at random in a market, managed to fly straight to the enemy camp. And still another queer thing is the punctuation of the titles.

Allan Dwan's Direction Good

SHORT time ago I wrote that directors relied too much on the facial expressions of their players to put over their points and overlooked opportunities to introduce a little novelty by allowing an actor to express something with his whole body. There is a good example of what I mean in East Side, West Side. George O'Brien is overcome with grief when he learns of the death of his benefactor. This fact is not registered by a huge close-up of his face writhing through glycerine tears. The scene is presented in a medium shot showing George moving distractedly about a room, picking up a photograph of the man he mourns and setting it down again, his every action registering his great grief. His facial expression is shown as definitely as it need be, as I maintain it always can be in a medium shot. When I viewed the picture I sat in the last row of seats and even in long shots I could get the

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expression on the faces of the players. Allan Dwan relies but little on close-ups in East Side, West Side, and while it is not a particularly good picture, it would not be as good as it is if it contained the usual number of meaningless close-ups. The direction on the whole is commendable except for one fault which Dwan repeats constantly, the fault of having his characters turn to face the camera in every scene. Some day I hope to see the back of one character towards the camera when three of them are engaged in conversation. Dwan shows them standing in a line facing the camera, and repeats the same fault when he has two characters in a scene. O'Brien and Virginia Valli stand in line and address one another over their shoulders. The obsession for showing full faces on the screen makes a whole picture unconvincing. Naturalness is the chief quality of a good picture, and none can be more natural than its grouping. East Side, West Side drags, in spite of an excellent performance by O'Brien. The opening shots showing him on a brick barge effectively plant him as a dreamer of big things that he would like to do. It is good direction, close-ups not being resorted to and the actor's back being photographed effectively to show him looking at New York's skyline, which forms the background for the shots. Later we see O'Brien make himself a successful prize-fighter and then become a builder, generally comporting himself with all the vigor and strength of character that we look for in our heroes. But when his benefactor dies and the girl he is about to marry, but whom we are sure does not have all his love, throws him over he goes on a rampage, gets drunk and indulges in the commendable diversion of wrecking speakeasies. The jamboree is not consistent with his character as it is developed. That kind of man would not do that sort of thing. Just a suggestion somewhere in the course of the picture that he felt the call of his prize-fighting days and yearned to express himself with physical violence would have made the outbreak plausible. True, we do see him hurling a book across a room, but that scarcely is sufficient. There is a shipwreck sequence that would have been more convincing with better technical treatment. In the miniatures, the surface of the ocean looks like the surface of a mill pond and looks like nothing ever encountered on the Banks of Newfoundland. And the iceberg upon which the ship is wrecked looms up like the Woolworth building while the ship is still a long way from it. As the sequence is shown there is no excuse for the collision. Miniature shots showing the vessel heeling over are followed by ship scenes showing the decks perfectly level. But no fault can be found with the manner in which Dwan handles his people in these scenes. Their reaction to the

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peril they are in is vivid and realistic, but I can not understand why Holmes Herbert, whose performance is good throughout, makes no effort to save himself. At least he should have donned a life-preserver. The impression we get is that he wanted to be drowned, and there is nothing in the picture to indicate that such could have been the case.

Walter E. Greene Presents Good One

THE tendency of the big producing organizations towards a policy of making pictures without actors is giving the independents a chance to gain popularity with the public. The big fellows are pursuing a policy of turning loose players whom they have made prominent and whose names have box-office value, thus supplying the smaller producers with talent for which there is a ready market. Such a picture as The Port of Missing Girls shows that at least one producer is alive to the box-office value of established names. It has one of the longest casts I ever saw and every name on it is well known. It is much too long for me to remember, but you can get an idea of how imposing the list is when I tell you that such people as Wyndham Standing, Charles Gerrard, Rosemary Theby, Natalie Kingston and Bodil Rosing play roles that range downward from small parts to bits. The result is that there is not a poorly acted scene in the picture, which probably was made with very little rehearsing, for it is not necessary to spend much time drilling people who know how to act. Among the many things about making pictures that the big producers have not learned is the economic value of good casts. The featured players in Missing Girls are Barbara Bedford and Malcolm McGregor, while Hedda Hopper, George Irving and Paul Nicholson have important roles. The picture is interesting. When I saw it it was at least a reel too long, and when it is trimmed down for release it will be a picture that should have a wide appeal. Irving Cummings directed it skilfully. The theme is the waywardness of the modern girl. At least the picture tells me that she is wayward, although I can see no sign of it in real life. I imagine that our parents had as much cause to worry about us as we have to worry about our children. I know I was a regular devil for staying out late on bicycle parties, and on sleighing parties in the winter I have held girls' hands under the buffalo robes. One night I became particularly devilish and held the hand of the girl on each side of me. That



merely is the way we used to neck in those days. They neck differently now, but the crime is no greater. However, the picture deals with the way girls leave home, and the pitfalls that beset their path. It teaches a wholesome lesson, and is none the less entertaining because it is propaganda. It definitely establishes the fact that it is better business for a girl to behave herself than it is for her to drift down the pathway of pleasure. One thing that it stresses, and with which I agree, is that when a girl leaves home it is the parents' fault. Barbara Bedford is the daughter of George Irving and Hedda Hopper. The father does not understand her and the mother is so busy investigating why working girls go astray that she has no time for her own daughters, Natalie Kingston being the other one. When Barbara is afraid to return home after an all-night necking party with McGregor Natalie lays the blame on the parents and tells them that the whole trouble is that they never have encouraged their children to confide in them. And therein lies a great truth. Despite the fact that the perils that beset girls are set forth realistically, the picture does not lack good taste; and despite the fact that it teaches a lesson, it is not preachy. Although the fadeout shows Barbara returning home in the arms of the man she loves, the screen recital of her flight from home will be quite enough to make our girls stop, look, and listen. Walter E. Greene is the producer of the picture, which was made by Brenda Productions. It averages much higher artistically and in entertainment value than the general run of the program pictures the big studios turn out. I don't know anything of Mr. Greene's record, but if he never gives us anything inferior to Missing Girls I am satisfied that he will have a long and prosperous career in pictures.

"The Love Mart" Is Not Convincing

THE LOVE MART has an intensely dramatic story; its atmosphere is fascinating and the direction of George Fitzmaurice artistic; it is acted splendidly by Billie Dove, Gilbert Roland, Noah Beery, Emile Chautard, Armand Kaliz and others in smaller parts, and yet it fails to stir you as it should. Its locale is New Orleans of a couple of centuries ago, when slavery flourished. Billie Dove is the toast of the city, something that her exquisite beauty and her charm make reasonable. Noah Beery, the main heavy, declares she is an octoroon and she is sold at auction as a slave. She stands on the block and is bid for by the gallants of the town who formerly worshipped at her shrine. You feel that Beery accused her falsely and you are aware of the mental agony that she must be suffering. The scene has everything to awaken your deepest sympathy and to move you to tears, but despite the fact that I am moved easily and that my tears go more than half way to meet an excuse for them, I viewed Billie's suffering with indifference. And it was not her fault. In The Love Mart she gives her finest performance since The Marriage Clause. She takes full advantage of the dramatic possibilities of the sequence, which is strengthened by the fine acting of Beery, Roland, and Chautard, but the potential drama in it simply did not reach from the screen to me. The picture has me puzzled. I am not quite sure why It is not great, as I can not put my finger on one outstanding fault. Like all Fitzmaurice's pictures, it has great

pictorial appeal and the direction is almost flawless, but there is something missing. I do not wish to give you the impression that The Love Mart is not a good picture. It is, a very good one, and it will do well at the box-office, but it is not as good as it should have been. It has some typical movie faults, however, little in themselves, but perhaps doing their share towards making it unconvincing. There is some exceedingly silly comedy that is out of place in such a picture. I do not blame Fitzmaurice for it, for undoubtedly the First National executives who seem to have a knack of making all their productions stilted, insisted upon the "comedy" going in. No person who could enjoy the picture as a whole could enjoy these silly interpolations, and no person who could enjoy the interpolations could enjoy the rest of it, so I cannot see what First National gains by including them. Colorful drama and silly drama are not enjoyed by the same people and should not be in the same picture. The argument might be advanced that the people who can enjoy this kind of comedy should be provided with it, but I can not imagine that they would be content to sit through seventy minutes of picture to get not more than two minutes that they can enjoy. They should be supplied with comedy that arises naturally out of the story. In the auction sequence the bidding is proceeding in a spirited manner when Roland, the hero, arrives. He is the fashionable barber and fencing master. His arrival creates a sensation-I can not understand why. He strides importantly through the throng and majestically makes a bid, but there is no drama in the latter action as his reception has absorbed all the drama in the scene. It would have been much better to have shown him as a humble witness of the auction, as

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For information inquire 1110 Guaranty Building, Hollywood Telephone GLadstone 2115 befitted his station, and then to have made drama out of him entering into the bidding. Many pictures are runed because their heroes are treated like heroes, without regard to their importance as individuals in the stories. There was no reason why Roland's arrival at the auction should have caused a sensation. Perhaps we can see in this one scene the reason why the whole picture does not register as it should. It is too much movie. First National had a wonderful story, and has made from it a picture much above its average, but I believe that it should have treated it on a larger scale, and that some of the pictorial art in it should have been sacrified to a greater development of its drama.

Junior Coghlan and a Happy Dog

ECIL DE MILLE is becoming more human all the time. I'm not quite sure if I've had anything to do with it. From time to time since the birth of The Spectator I've urged that we should have human beings on the screen. At a time when producers assured me that the public could not be interested in old men I argued that old men were exactly what the public wanted if it got them in good stories. There is nothing more appealing than a lovable old man. And in season and out I've pleaded for more dogs presented as dogs and not as detectives. It goes without saying that anyone who could be interested in old men and dogs must like children. De Mille is giving us all three. In Rudolph Schildkraut and Junior Coghlan he has one of the finest old men and the greatest child actor on the screen, and he has made two real dog pictures, in addition to having dogs play important parts in others. In Gallegher, a new picture directed by Elmer Clifton, we have Junior Coghlan in perhaps his most outstanding performance, and a dog that is a joy. Richard Harding Davis's story of the copy-boy is one of the great classics of newspaper literature, and newspapermen are not going to be disappointed with the manner in which it has been told on the screen. It is the first offering of Ralph Block as a De Mille supervisor and it is the best picture that I can remember having seen Block's name connected with. One fault with most pictures about children is that their appeal has been confined to children and to people who were old enough to love them. The flapper age, upon which pictures depend so much for their support, does not take kindly to such screen fare. Gallegher avoids this weakness by being a story of a newspaper story, and not the story of a boy, even though a boy is the most important character in it. Brought up in the news-

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paper world, I am apt to exaggerate the extent of the appeal of a newspaper picture, for we are prone to think that which interests us must interest everyone else, but if Gallegher is not a great success at the box-office I will be surprised. Certainly it should get enthusiastic notices from the press. For the first time newspapermen will see themselves on the screen, and they will see a newspaper office which performs the extraordinary screen feat of looking like a newspaper office. Also they will be grateful to this picture for being free from reporters who run around with notebooks in their hands, as nearly all screen reporters and no actual reporters do. As I saw the picture, before it was ready finally for release, it did not observe all the newspaper traditions, but I believe that is being fixed. Harrison Ford, a cock-sure reporter, stumbles onto the story of a lifetime when he has only a few minutes left in which to get it in the last edition, but he stops to joke with Junior instead of evincing a frenzied desire to get the story to the city editor's desk, as a real newspaperman would. Again in the closing sequence, when a still greater story breaks, the screen does not reflect that thrill that all newspapermen feel when they know they are scooping the world. But these are minor faults. Gallegher is a crackajack little picture, quite good enough to be shown anywhere. Junior Coghlan, quite irrespective of his age, is one of the best actors on the screen, and gives a magnificent performance. Harrison Ford, Elinor Fair and Ivan Lebedeff contribute largely to the excellence of the picture, and E. H. Calvert, who plays the city editor, makes one of the best newspapermen that I have seen on the screen. Clifton's direction is very good throughout. And I must not forget the dog. He is Junior's pal, and

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6432 Hollywood Boulevard We Deliver — HE. 0966 hasn't much to do with the story, but he is a joyous canne, delighted with the world at large and devoted to his owner. He will go a long way in pictures if given half a chance.

Too many production executives waste their time in trying to gauge the public's taste in screen entertainment. They should give all their thought to turning out the best possible pictures and soon they would learn that they would be creating the public's taste. The styles are set by the pictures themselves. When The Big Parade was shown the public liked it and naturally it looked for more war pictures in the hope that it could experience again the pleasure that the Vidor picture gave it. We had many war pictures because the fancy of the public was caught by one of them, and not because the public on its own initiative demanded them. Underworld will create a demand for more crook dramas to the extent of the popularity it achieves. If no one liked it there would be no demand for similar pictures. If a dog picture such as De Mille's Almost Human were a tremendous success the public would demand more dogs in its pictures. Seventh Heaven turns the public attention to human pictures. No producer need hesitate about making any kind of picture on account of his fear that there is no demand for it. If he makes a perfect picture out of it he is going to set a new style and reap the reward that goes to the pioneer. His greatest fault now is that instead of creating public taste he tries to imitate others who have done it successfully. One Japanese picture that pleased the public would establish a vogue for Japanese pictures, and so on, all the way down the line.

Pigs, now playing at El Capitan, is worth seeing. The children will be delighted with it, and the grown people will find in it much real humor and humanity. It is in keeping with the high standard set by the Henry Duffy players. I have seen it twice and each time I was impressed by the audience's evident enjoyment of something that is clean and decent. Gay Seabrooke gives an extraordinary performance as the girl who wants two hundred and fifty dollars so urgently that she has no objection to resorting to blackmail to get it. Emerson Treacy, the boy, is equally delightful, while the performances of Florence Roberts and May Buckley are other high-lights of an altogether pleasing production. Towards the end of the play there is a scene which motion picture people should see and analyse. The boy brings home a check for his profits on the pig venture and gives it to his father just in time to save the home. May Buckley, the boy's mother, is handed the check without knowing what

KING JOINS THE NUT CLUB

I wrote to a producer for a catch-as-catch-can chance in his studio, a job, or something along that line. Well, he writes back that he thinks I am crazy. Just thinks it, mind you. Lord—I know I'm crazy—you have to be to get along in this game. So I am out for the limit. There is nothing half way about me—I'm even going to be crazy enough to make good pictures when I connect up, and show folks how crazy I really am.

ANTHONY C. HIBBS 1742 WEST 49TH STREET VErmont 0682 it is. As soon as she realizes what it means, she turns and walks quickly off the stage. It is an admirable bit of direction. The audience knows that the mother is fleeing to the garden to have a good cry, and it cries with her. In all my play-going experience I can remember no other scene that so suddenly and unexpectedly brings a lump to the throat and tears to the eyes.

Breakfast at Sunrise is rather a trivial vehicle for such an excellent comedienne as Constance Talmadge. I never have seen her yet in a picture that I thought gave her talents an opportunity to register fully. With such a star, a story by Fred de Gresac, continuity by Jack Jevne, and direction by Mal St. Clair, we had a right to expect something notable, but the trouble was that there was nothing to start with in the first place. But I enjoyed the picture on account of the extraordinary cleverness of St. Clair's direction. He contributes many skilful touches. I like the way he concludes a scene by having one or more of the characters in it exit through a doorway, pulling the door closed to put a full stop to a scene, as a period is placed at the end of a sentence. Alice White demonstrates in this picture that she is going to have a brilliant career in pictures. She has a vivid personality and everything she does gives the viewer the impression that she has brains. She should go a long way. This picture also reestablishes my confidence in Don Alvarado as an actor. I did not like him in Carmen, but in Breakfast he gives a very pleasing performance. Most of the titles are extraordinarily silly.

What Price Glory? holds the record for duration of run for the Carthay Circle, having lasted for twenty-four weeks. Seventh Heaven follows with twenty-two weeks. Then came The Volga Boatman with nineteen weeks, and Bardelys, the Magnificent and Loves of Carmen tied with

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seven weeks each. Four pictures ran for a longer time at Grauman's Egyptian than any picture has at the Carthay Circle—Covered Wagon, Ten Commandments, Big Parade and Robin Hood. What Price Glory? and Seventh Heaven at the Circle topped the runs of Thief of Bagdad and Gold Rush at the Egyptian. Volga Boatman beat Iron Horse by two weeks. Both Romola and Better 'Ole at the Egyptian beat the runs of Bardelys and Carmen at the Circle. Some interesting deductions could be made from these records, but I'm going to bed.

Then came dawn.

In a recent Spectator I stated that Ben Hecht, after writing Underworld, found working conditions at the Paramount studio such that he asked to have his contract cancelled. Donald Thompson made a similar statement in the New York Telegram. Paramount denied it, claiming that Hecht still was writing for it. Hecht settled the argument by cabling Thompson as follows: "I broke my contract with Famous Players five months ago informing them in a quavering but determined voice to take back their gold which consisted of sixty thousand dollars in cash and a bronze plaque with Mr. Zukor's picture on it to hang in my study stop I still pale at the memory of this fantastic gesture stop sixty thousand dollars is more money that I have ever seen and I am not prudish stop but whenever I think upon the complicated and dreary stupidity of the Seraglio I fled I feel egad that my sacrifice was a bargain. (Signed) BEN HECHT."

Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., is a brilliant boy. First he caught the public's fancy as a screen actor, and if he had been handled rightly he would be today one of the best boxoffice bets. Then he tried the speaking stage and in Young Woodley gave a performance of great merit, revealing talents that would assure him a successful career before the footlights if he stayed with it. The titles in his father's picture, The Gaucho, bear tribute to his literary ability. I have seen no better titles in any picture. To amuse himself and his friends in private he does a series of imitations that are worthy of headline honors on any vaudeville bill. And in addition to all this he is a nice, modest boy, which is the most important of all.

There is an illuminating title in Jesse James: "He sees ahead of him inevitable death." It's queer, but I can see the same thing. So can Neal Dodd, Peter the Hermit, and Jackie Coogan. Conway Tearle also has been complaining about it.

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AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By DONALD BEATON - The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

HERE isn't much story to Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, but Mal St. Claire has made a pretty good little picture out of it. The biggest asset of the picture is Ruth Taylor, the girl who plays Lorelei. She puts over the part very well, and besides being exceedingly pretty she has a good personality. Alice White as Dorothy was another good addition to the cast. Her work was clever, and she fitted the part of Dorothy to per-fection. The thing about Gentlemen Prefer Blondes: there are very few, pointed in was the fact that it was so short and had so little to it. The picture followed the book faithfully, but it didn't follow it far enough. It stopped just where the book was getting interesting. Another thing was that Lorelei didn't seem to do her gold digging as subtly as she did in the book. That was the best thing about the book—her easy way of getting money and other things. There is one thing which can be said for Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, there were very few, if any, mistakes which were due to carelessness. The picture ran very smoothly. As a matter of fact, that was in a way what was the matter with it; it ran too smoothly. There were no outstandingly funny scenes and there were no outstandingly good ones. By the same token, there were no outstandingly bad scenes. At least, the picture followed the book, which is more than can be said for some pictures made from famous books.

LTHOUGH Tell It to Sweeney is not a good comedy, the team of Bancroft and Conklin is so much better than the team of Beery and Hatton that it was refreshing. There was a lot of silly stuff on trains, such as Bancroft and Conklin falling off a train doing a good sixty miles an hour and landing unhurt on the ground. They also leaped from a bridge onto the same train and landed unhurt. The whole thing was silly, as both of them pulled enough mistakes to have been fired a dozen times. They pulled enough impossible mistakes and stuff like that to make the picture absurd. There were chances for some humor in Tell It to Sweeney, but they were all neglected. As I have said before, this team stuff is no good and should be done away with. If Paramount would split Bancroft and Conklin and make them stars in their own pictures, they would make just twice as much money.

THE direction of Mauritz Stiller was the thing which was responsible for the success of The Woman on Trial. The story was uninteresting, but the brilliant treatment given it made the picture good and interesting. Pola Negri's acting was also a high light of the picture. She puts marvelous sympathy into all her parts. However, I would like to see her do something sometime where she doesn't

have to use so much emotion and put so much feeling into her work. She only smiled about twice in The Woman on Trial. The characters in the picture were finely drawn, and not one was allowed to become exaggerated. Particularly was the part of the jealous husband held down well. It is very easy to let a part like that become ridiculous. All the shots were well composed and some of them were very beautiful. The fade-out was one of the loveliest scenes that has been filmed in quite a long time. Wherever there was a chance for some beauty in the film, it was utilized, and thus the picture was kept from being the sordid thing that the plot would have made it if it had not been relieved.

LTHOUGH The Circus, the latest Gold Rush, it is good enough to Chaplin comedy, is not a second keep Chaplin his title as the greatest comedian of them all. There are no big laughs in The Circus as there were during the dance of the Oceanic Roll and the teetering cabin sequences in The Gold Rush. Chaplin does things which would be plain slap-stick with any other comedian, but which become screamingly funny when he does them. He is the only man who can throw a custard pie and make it art. Another thing which makes Chaplin pictures so funny is his genius for pantomime. Whenever he does anything in pantomime, it is always easy to understand what he is trying to put over. His gags are always original. There is never anything in his pictures that has been done before, and it is his originality that makes his smallest gag very funny. He thinks of stuff that only he can put over right. The last sequence of the picture was good, but it would have been far more touching if Chaplin had made it a little clearer just how great a sacrifice he was making in giving up the girl. In the scene where Chaplin is begging the other man to come and get the girl, he has his back to the camera. There he put over the pathos of that scene, one of the most pathetic in the picture, to my mind, without showing his face. There is something very touching in his small figure compared to the large one of Harry Crocker as he pleads with Crocker to come back and take the

ONSIDERING the silly slap-stick comedy that was injected at intervals, The Legionnaires in Paris was a pretty fair little comedy. Kit Guard and Al Cook make up a comedy team that certainly has a faculty for getting a laugh now and then. Part of the time the picture looked like a two reel comedy stretched over a feature length amount of film. At other times, it was quite a funny comedy. What story it had was a million years old, but there wasn't as

much far fetched stuff in The Legionnaires in Paris as there usually is in a
picture of this type. The cut backs
to the war were absurd. Guard and
Cook wandered around No Man's Land
just as if there weren't a war within
a hundred miles of them. The shells
falling around them didn't disturb
them in the least, and, as a matter of
fact, I don't blame them, as the shells
were far from convincing. The entire
war stuff was silly. The work of one
of the girls was so good that I asked
her name and found out that it is
Virginia Sale. She will go a long way
on the screen if she gets rid of a few
mannerisms she has now. She uses
her hands too much, and her teeth are
a little too much in evidence.

PAUL LENI, who directed The Cat and the Canary, has a great deal of ability along the mystery line. He has made another thriller, The Chinese Parrot. The story is not so terribly weird, yet the filming that Leni gives it keeps one on edge all the time. He has a way of bringing characters into a room and blurring their faces so that their identity is unknown. When he has worked the suspense up to the proper point, he gradually focuses the camera right until their faces are plain. Apparently, the picture is full of promiscuous murders, but all the murdered come back in the end unharmed. The best thing about The Chinese Parrot is the fact that Sojin didn't have to look like a bad dream all the time in it. Also, he was given a sympathetic part, something he handles so well that he ought to be given more of them. He is my favorite character actor. Eddie Burns was supposed to meet Sojin at the boat in the picture. Instead of watching where the passengers were getting off, Burns was looking in the opposite direction, and so he missed him. Burns should have looked at the people getting off the boat. There were several little mistakes of that nature in The Chinese Parrot, but on the whole it was a very cleverly done picture.

THE Lone Wolf stories by Louis THE Lone Wolf stories by Louis
Joseph Vance have never made an outstandingly good picture, but they have always made entertaining ones. Such is the case of Alias the Lone Wolf, produced by Columbia with Bert Lytell in the starring part. There were many things the matter with the picture, in spite of the fact that it was entertaining. In one place a thief steals some jewels from a fellow passenger's cabin. She goes across the corridor to her own cabin and hides them in the powder box. The powder box is the place where anyone would natually look first if he were looking for the jewels. The woman was sunnosed to be an experienced crook, and as such she would have had a hiding place all prepared long before she stole the jewels. As it was, she looked around as though she didn't know where to hide them. In another place, Bert Lytell, clean shaven and wearing a dress suit,

stepped out of a room for a minute or less and came back in the uniform of a customs official with a grey beard adorning his face. The quick change was impossible in the short time he had to do it. There were many more mistakes about as senseless as the ones I have enumerated.

HERE was so much raving done about The Blood Ship that I thought I was going to see something very great. However, except for more bloodshed than is usual in pictures, the picture was not much different from any other. There wasn't enough story to The Blood Ship to justify its length. The mutiny of the crew was the thing which should end the picture, therefore the mutiny was put off time after time in order that the picture might be feature length. The crew could only mutiny once, because if they weren't successful the first time, they would all be hanged. Thus the crew wasted chance after chance to mutiny. Their mutiny needed a good business manager. George B. Seitz, who directed The Blood Ship, did a fairly good job except that there were some very moving picturish arrangements of characters. When they gathered around one of their number who was dying, they all stood aside so the camera could get it all. The way to have shot the scene where the dying man was in the bunk and all the others were clustered around him would have been to shoot from the opposite side of the bunk which would have been from the side of the ship. That way, the expressions on the faces of the characters could have been caught while they were in a natural grouping. In another place the captain of the ship lashed Hobart Bosworth with a brass-studded whip until he was exhausted, but Bosworth's shirt wasn't even cut. The same whip, wielded by Bosworth on the captain, tore the captain's shirt to shreds. The cast of The Blood Ship was good, but it was a colored man by the name of Blue Washington who ran away with the picture. His comedy was very clever and when he was serious he meant business. He should go a long way as a character actor.

THERE was an item in the paper the other day which said that Anita Loos was going to live henceforth in Vienna. After seeing Publicity Madness, whose story is credited to her, I can't understand why she doesn't make it the North Pole. I don't for a minute imagine that the story she wrote was used, because I don't think one person could be responsible for so much rotten stuff. Her story probably gave a chance for clever acting and some funny situations, but whoever massacred it for the screen cut them all out and substituted a lot of silly burlesque stuff that could never happen in a thousand years. Malcolm Stuart Boylan contributed some frightful puns in the way of titles. The only title which was as funny as his usually

are was one about Aimee MacPherson. To try and name everything that was the matter with this picture would be far too large a task for me. Suffice it to say that Eddie Lowe and Lois Moran flew to Hawaii in a plane which at the most couldn't have carried more than thirty or forty gallons of gaso-

line. Also Lowe without knowing how to fly the plane or how to navigate hit Honolulu very easily. To make a burlesque of a flight which cost so many lives so recently is the disgustingly bad taste we are led to expect from the Fox organization.

ABOUT BRITISH FILMS

By CEDRIC BELFRAGE

Second to None and Tip Toes, to which I referred in my previous article, were produced last year. Here are the high spots of the present year's program from English studios, including pictures completed, in production and scheduled:

Land of Hope and Glory, a bigger and better Empire story based on Elgar's community song hit. They tried to get Philip Gibbs to write the story for this, but it was his very sound opinion that the word "Empire" made the average English citizen want to vomit, not to mention its effect on Americans and foreigners. Finally a novelist named Valentine Williams contributed the tale, and Harley Knoles, an American director whose experience of the Empire is confined to losing British investors £1,000,000 in a dud film enterprise just after the war, was engaged to direct. Knoles still gets work in England because he can lay claim to Hollywood experience, although in point of fact he has made one picture here in the last several years.

Motherland, another evidently of similar calibre. Now being directed by G. B. Samuelson, a European Jew, the man who stranded Betty Blythe in Berlin and whom she afterwards sued for non-payment of salary.

Further Adventures of the Flag Lieutenant. (There's a title!) A naval melodrama being directed by W. P. Kellino, a former acrobat, whose one forte is low comedy.

Somehow Good, directed by an unknown, starring Fay Compton, a plump west-end stage star of some 35 summers who is consistently cast for ingenue roles on the screen. She is paid a very large salary owing to her stage eminence, but is practically unknown outside of London.

Sailors Don't Care, to be directed by Victor Saville, who was a success as an exhibitor.

His House in Order. Another example of British producers' crazy and unbusinesslike spending. The stars will be Gladys Cooper (aged 38) and Gerald du Maurier (aged 54), both of whom are in the first rank of stage actors and would certainly not perform in a picture for less than £2000 a week. Yet they are all but unknown to film audiences, and in any case are superanuated from the picture standpoint except for character work, and do not photograph well. The director will be Randle Ayrton, a fine stage actor in the Shakespearean tradition who has never before made a picture

and is quite cut and dried in the technique of the legitimate theatre.

One of the Best, a screen version of a childish old melodrama of the nineties about a young army officer expelled from his regiment for stealing valuable documents from the colonel's safe, the abused hero turning up at the end with evidence of the real criminal's guilt. Directed by Hayes Hunter, another American out of job in his own country, who probably until he got this assignment did not know the difference between a Life and a Grenadier Guard. Produced with the co-operation of the British army, which it can do nothing but hold up to ridicule just as Second to None held up the navy.

Maria Marten and Sweeny Todd, the original old melodramas, to be directed by Walter West, who has never failed to emerge from the studio with six reels of nonsense in all his years as a British director. West announces that he will make the two new pictures "exactly as produced on the stage, with a cast composed entirely of stage actors who have never been on the screen". It is almost unbelievable that stories like these should enter anybody's head as having appeal to modern movie audiences.

Guns of Loos, a war picture, directed by Sinclair Hill. Ask any English actor in Hollywood about Sinclair Hill.

Carry On, another of the same, to be made by Dinah Shurey, a rather rich amateur whose damage to innocent ceiluloid has already been appalling.

The Luck of the Navy, sea melodrama, directed by Fred Paul, one of the British studios' old hyper-contemptibles. It has as stars Evelyn Laye, another stage performer unknown outside London, nearly thirty years old and of a non-photographic type of beauty, making her screen debut; and Henry Victor, playing the hero role, though in Hollywood it is recognized that he is essentially a character of heavy type.

character of heavy type.

The Constant Nymph. This is being directed by Basil Dean, the champion money-loser over a long period as a stage producer in the west-end, who suddenly decided, I suppose, that more money can be lost in pictures. He knows nothing of screen technique and has no capable assistant to keep him on the right track. His star is Ivor Novello, but the production at least has the merit of a new discovery in the title-role, instead of some octogenarian stage artist.

Five pictures on the list of more

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I wish I could remember what

AL COHN

asked me to put in his ad this time. It was something about what a swell writer he is.

CHARLES KENYON

SCENARIST

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UNIVERSAL

LLOYD NOSLER

SUPERVISING FILM EDITOR
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UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

PAUL SCHOFIELD

ORIGINALS AND ADAPTATIONS

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WRITER

DE MILLE STUDIO

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than sixty show some signs of possible merit. One is The Fake, an adaptation of a rather good stage play by the European, George Jacoby. Two are directed by Alfred J. Hitchcock, who is only twenty-seven and is the one white hope of British films; they are Easy Virtue (Noel Coward's play) and The Ring, an original by Hitchcock. The others are Huntingtower, with Harry Lauder and Vera Veron-ina directed by George Pearson, an erratic but capable Englishman; and A Little Bit of Fluff, with Syd Chap-lin, a weak story of which this star may make something. The last is the picture already bought for America by M.-G.-M.

The pulse of British production can be gathered pretty well from the above resume. It has nothing of its own to offer. The personnel of the industry is made up almost entirely of proven incompetents in the picture game and highly paid recruits from the stage who have less than nothing to give to the screen medium. Mabel Poulton, who is playing The Constant Nymph, and Estelle Brody, a girl who scored a hit in Mademoiselle from Armentieres and is now being featured, are the only indications of any effort to bring forward new young stars at the tender age demanded by the screen. Perhaps there are one or two other newcomers with starring potentialities, but if so they have not been signed up on long contracts as they should have been.

Rex Ingram and Ray Griffith are said to have thrown in their lot with British production. One could hardly imagine two Hollywood celebrities less likely to assist matters in England. With the absence of all supervision Ingram will only go still more his own way, which is not the box-office way. As for Griffith, he has already shown that the one thing he needs to make successful pictures is firm and competent supervision of a kind which does not exist in England to-day.

she scores in the later. She is not the "damsel in distress" type at all, as she seems to be perfectly capable of tak-ing care of herself. However, in the sequence in which she faces her betrayal, the close ups are a series of tragic masks, ranging from Melpomene to Medusa.

Which leads one to ask; would a man, dastardly enough to lay such a trap for an innocent woman, his friend, have the courage to confess it? Good titles would have helped the picture tremendously. As it was, the titles were as bald and conventional as the rest of the picture.

F. ELY PAGET.

PUBLIC VEERS TO REALISM

To the Editor:

American audiences are now undergoing a change. No longer is the saccharine stuff having the vogue that it did have. Instead, there is a reaction against it and the attention today is focussed on realism. Realistic literature, realistic plays and realistic screen offerings now are supreme. While Americans may not want their realism as heavy nor in as large doses as the European likes it, they show as never before their appreciation of good work. The screen "hits" have a grimness such as Seventh Heaven, Barbed Wire, The Way of All Flesh, The Flesh and the Devil, Underworld, The Cat and the Canary, to mention a few examples. Another powerful "hit" was Beau Geste.

Producers need have no fear that the small town will not want the meaty drama. For the small town knows the trend of motion pictures, reads everything about pictures, is familiar with all the actors and directors, and knows films as if the distance from the film center were trifling. Box office reports show that the small town does not want the sweet stuff and that it does appreciate drama. Grimness has scored to a remarkable degree. Not that it would be advisable to use dark colors in every screen production. That is non-

VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

ON FOREIGN PICTURES
Dear Mr. Beaton:

Hitherto such pictures as have come from the hands of foreign directors and dramatists have generally been distinguished by novelty of subject and treatment. The Woman on Trial seems to have no claim to either. The direction is conventional—in spots archaic—and follows the line of least resistance. The story is packed with ancient hokum, the sort that passed with Way Down East and pictures of

Hope Loring is credited with the continuity, but I can hardly believe that she is responsible for the clumsy method of telling the story from the witness box, thereby eliminating much of the realism of the story, and depriving it of an effective climax by using

the court scene for that purpose.

The story as it stands is straight tragedy, as should be all stories of sacrifice. Recompense weakens the sacrifice, and sends the spectator away with a sense of futility. When one has to resort to such hokum as bringing a lover back from the grave, it becomes ridiculous.

Besides, it is all wrong, dramatically speaking. The child is the dramatic objective, the lover merely a subsidiary character. Gaston, too, is merely a tool, and, as we get the story, the true antagonist drops from sight entirely.

A far more effective climax would have been to convict the husband on the testimony of the valet of having plotted the betrayal of the wife, and thus carry the conflict to the end of the story.

The betrayal of the wife by her dearest friend seems to be a "tour de force" to introduce an unexpected twist into the story. It is utterly illogical and quite outside the characterization of Gaston as we have previously known it. Indeed, we had fully expected that Gaston would bring about the climax, the death of the jealous husband, at the hands of the outraged wife; his offense seeming to outweigh that of his tool.

However, such a twist as this would fool even the most astute movie-goer. Personally we are inclined to believe that the elimination of Gaston is a dramatic offence, as is the re-appearance of the moribund lover. We would have been willing to take it for granted that the two might meet and marry "somewhere in the distant Aiden" and let it go at that. At any rate, the meeting was not of sufficient importance to warrant a ghastly moonlight silhouette immediately fol-lowing their meeting in broad daylight where his coming is heralded by his shadow.

The acting is up to the average, though Latour is a trifle too obvious in his demonstrations of jealousy, and is too fond of rounding his eyes. Moreover, a man given to the use of a monocle, uses it continuously for distant vision. He invariably drops it while reading or conversing.

Hansen is merely called upon to look pathetic, and does it admirably, but it seems a pity that a man with his splendid physique should be called on to play a consumptive. Pola's performance is rather uneven. She fails in the earlier sequences as much as GOULD'S

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Producers are organized.

We must be.

THE COMMITTEE OF TWENTY

sense. But realism has taken the people and taken them hard.

Today the character actor is coming into his own. The boy and girl are secondary. Up at the top in popularity are Lon Chaney, Emil Jannings, Conrad Veidt, George Bancroft, Greta Garbo, Pola Negri, and with their vivid personalities the Beerys, Rudolph Schildkraut, Jean Hersholt. Louis Wolheim, Louise Fazenda, Belle Bennett, Victor McLaglen, Albert Gran, George Fawcett, Charlie Murray, and any number of character actors from the speaking stage. Seventh Heaven brought to the fore vivid personalities in Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrel. Both have personalities. Clara Bow will always have a place. She has had some bad vehicles but she has a personality to save her under any circumstances. A number of leading men are coming into greater prominence because the roles they play are leads and characterizations, while many leading men are losing out because their vehicles are not meaty and because the character actor even in a minor role invariably gets the scene. The public wants acting today. They are not giving the leading man in most instances dramatic opportunities. They must put meatier stories at his disposal. One could mention any number of clever character people who steal the picture with just the smallest situation entrusted to them. But there is drama in it and the audience will leave a theater remembering less the conventional hero and heroine, than the gripping realism registered in perhaps a few seconds by the actor steeped in stage traditions, who is a veteran in technic and who gives such a performance that it seems a slice of life itself.

Further, it is giving a richer opportunity to the writer, who can register far better when he is handling drama instead of the sugary stuff that could as well emanate from the kind of people who used to write scenarios in

the early day. There is a new artistry on the screen because acting is getting its just recognition. ROBERT N. LEE.

A STEPCHILD OF THE MOVIES

Dear Sir:

Six months ago I learned for the first time how motion pictures were made. It happened to be an English military picture from Africa and as I had just arrived from that continent and that service, I was doubly inter-

It struck me at once that something was very unreal, though I could see that the technical director had taken the utmost care in having uniforms and other outfit correct.

I soon found out-it was the way the soldiers were riding.

Most of them were former cowboys and consequently excellent riders, but the Western riding-style is just as different from European military riding

as "One-step" is from "Tango".

I pointed this out to the technical director and he gave me the astonishing answer: "Nobody knows the difference."

How entirely wrong he was.

These American pictures are shown all over the world and people are more familiar with the style of riding in different countries than they are with minor details on foreign uniforms.

Since that picture was made I have seen quite a few others of the same kind and they all have had the same fault-the style of riding is neglected. (When I say riding in this connection I do not mean Western riding or "stunt-riding", because that side is very well taken care of in the Motion Picture business).

What is the reason for this negligence?

Producers, directors and technical advisers spend any amount of time and money to get other details exactly right, why not this one?
Here in Los Angeles live thousands

of good riders from nearly every coun-

try of the world, former army officers, soldiers, polo players, school-riders and other gentleman riders—why not use them where they fit best?

According to my knowledge, whenever anybody applies for extra work, the applicant's word concerning his adaptability or fitness is always accepted.

It would be easy for Central Casting to let somebody give these horsemen a test and classify them.

In that way the studios would get just what they are looking for without spending extra money and time.

COLONEL IVAR DE VIRO.

BLAH!

Dear Mr. Beaton:

It seems almost incredible that any director with brains, taste and intelligence enough to turn out a film with five or six good reels of splendid, well-told story, beautifully acted, should spoil it with the last reel of preposterous hokum that would insult the intelligence of a tabloid newspaper addict. I refer to the film, The Country Doctor. Who would believe that any doctor could perform a "major operation by the light of the burning cabin"?

After driving five miles up hill in a blinding snow storm, it's my impression that the old doctor would be as numb as the director was dumb who conceived such a situation. And of equal intelligence would be a man who built a woodshed so far away from his house that he had to shovel a path to it or flounder through the snow of a New England winter to reach it. I have seen a great many farm houses all over New England, but I do not recall one at the moment that did not have the woodshed adjoining the house and so that the woodpile could be reached without Blah, and again much exposure. blah.

FRANK E. HATCH.

Boston, Mass.

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It is my ambition to make The Spectator a paper that its readers will support and which will need to depend but little on advertising patronage. To accomplish this the circulation must be large.

When my convictions made it inevitable that I must champion the cause of those who work in studios, I deprived the pages of The Spectator of considerable advertising that had been promised. I then decided to let advertising go-hang, and concentrate on circulation.

For nearly two years I have been spending money to keep The Spectator going. I am afraid I have to shift the burden to its readers, to those whom it seeks to serve.

Will all those who have delayed sending in their checks for subscriptions to exhibitors please not delay any longer?

Will you people who buy it on newsstands send in your yearly subscriptions? It is cheaper for you that way and I make more out of it.

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No. 9

The Ten Best Pictures of the

A List of the Most Notable Performances

Uncle Sam About to Make Industry Respectable

We Exchange Letters With A Correspondent

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MIXED MARRIAGES FRENCH DRESSING WILD GEESE SUNRISE

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and a Happy New Year.

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TITLES by
DWINELLE BENTHALL
and RUFUS McCOSH

228 MARKHAM BLDG. HOLLYWOOD JOHN FARROW

WRITER

DE MILLE STUDIO

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THE FILM SPECTATOR

EVERY OTHER SATURDAY

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WELFORD BEATON, President and Editor

7213 SUNSET BOULEVARD
HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA HEMPSTEAD 2801

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He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., DECEMBER 24, 1927

The Ten Best Pictures of the Year

SEVENTH HEAVEN
RESURRECTION
FLESH AND THE DEVIL
WHITE GOLD
WILD GEESE

BARBED WIRE CAMILLE MY BEST GIRL THE SYMPHONY THE GAUCHO

The Greatest Moment of the Year

When Janet Gaynor speaks the title, "I, too, am a remarkable fellow!" in Seventh Heaven.

The Greatest Close-Up

One of John Barrymore in The Beloved Rogue.

The Greatest Performance by an Actress
Janet Gaynor in Seventh Heaven.

The Greatest Performance by an Actor Jean Hersholt in Old Heidelberg.

Other Notable Performances

Dolores Del Rio in Resurrection
Emil Jannings in Way of All Flesh
Pola Negri in Barbed Wire
Charles Farrell in Seventh Heaven
George Bancroft in Underworld
Lon Chaney in Mr. Wu

Jean Hersholt in Alias the Deacon and The Symphony Russell Simpson in Wild Geese

OF NECESSITY my selections are confined to pictures I have seen, and of necessity also they reflect a personal opinion. There is no reason why you should attach any more importance to my list than to your own. Perhaps on your list would appear King of Kings and Sunrise. I do not include either because I do not feel that there was anything in them besides a wealth of motion picture mechanics. I prefer The Gaucho to The King of Kings because Douglas Fairbanks put more real religion into his picture, which was not all about religion, than De Mille did in his, which was about nothing else. I have placed on my list only pictures that I feel realized all their

possibilities. That is all I ask of any picture. That I have no particular taste to which I ask film offerings to conform is demonstrated by the wide range of themes and treatments of those which I have selected. My list is made up of pictures which I have reviewed in The Spectator during this calendar year. Some of them have not been released yet, and there are others which have been released which might have been given a place if I had seen them.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

HERE should be something in this Spectator about Christmas. I am sitting in my flower garden, trying to write it. My mind reaches back to the Christmases of the yesterdays, indelibly whitened by December snows, musical with the jingle of glittering sleigh bells, and colored by red woolen mufflers and mittens, and refuses to let me see Christmas in the flowers that bloom around me, or to feel it in the warm rays of the sun, or to catch the spirit of it in the perfume of the blossoms that wave incense at me from the lemon tree under which one of my dogs is burying a bone which the other will dig up presently. The scarlet line which dignified poinsettias trace with their tops to mark the border of my garden shares its color with the berries that accentuate the green of holly, but one can not base a Christmas essay on a thing so small. If it were not for the signs in-doors I would not know that we were going to have a Christmas. Every closet in the house is closed to me except my own, and I have threatened to break the neck of anyone who enters it. The Christmas tree is on the back porch, and Mary, my youngest youngster, has crawled all over the dining-room floor with me while we made sure that all the lights were working. We've had a terrific debate about where the tree is to be placed, for we've taken this house since last Christmas. Four of us were for a corner in my library and Mother thought it should be in the alcove in the dining room, and when I get this written I'm going to help Marcel, our Filipino houseboy, carry out the great fern that now stands in the alcove, and run the string of lights from a plug place in the floor, under the rug and above a door to the ceiling of the alcove, from which they can be let down in a cataract of good cheer to make the tree look jolly. And on Christmas morning the branches of the tree will be covered with packages, which will overflow to the floor and constitute a heap of happiness. When we have opened all of them and exclaimed over each new discovery, Mother and I will sit on the couch in front of the grate fire, between us the big pile of Christmas cards that the postman has been bringing to us for days, and we will slit the envelopes and pull the good wishes from them. There are quite a lot of cards this Christmas, and I feel that the little Spectator has done things during the year that make more people think of us at Christmas, which is a nice thought that will make the fire more cheerful and broaden our smiles when Marcel finally manages to get us into the breakfast room. To all the friends that The Spectator has made it extends its cordial greetings. It is glad to have settled down as a part of Hollywood, and it hopes that in the next year it will do nothing to forfeit the friendships it has made thus far.

And so to all of you—A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Murnau and Rosher Are "Sunrise" Heroes

CUNRISE in some respects marks the farthest spot the screen has reached in its progress as a developing art. F. W. Murnau, the director, and Charles Rosher, the chief cameraman, are the heroes. A great deal of the direction is inspired, and all of the photography is of a quality that gives the screen a new dignity as an art. It is a picture that is of tremendous value to Hollywood as a subject for study. Also it is interesting as the first production in this country of the man who sent us the epochal Last Laugh. Another point of interest is that it comes from the lot that gave us Seventh Heaven, another important picture directed by a man who was making pictures here before we began to notice the foreigners. From every standpoint Sunrise is important quite apart from its claim to consideration for the merits it possesses. Within his marked limitations Murnau is a director extraordinarily skilled in the use of the tools he works with. He deems the camera to be possessed of story-telling powers, and in making this picture he was fortunate in having at his command in Rosher a master of photography. He puts into his scenes a pictorial quality that matches their moods. I do not think the screen has shown us anything more sublimely beautiful than the shot of the sailboat leaving the shore after Janet Gaynor and George O'Brien have had their celebration in the city. The dissolving shots planting the spirit of vacation time possess the same rich quality in addition to being interesting as camera tricks. Murnau's direction demonstrates a point that I have urged constantly: that close-ups are a detriment to a picture unless inserted only when there are demands for them. Some of his most dramatic scenes are presented in deep-medium or long shots. This is logical treatment. The sets were erected with such scenes in mind; the lighting was arranged to preserve the moods of the scenes, the cameras placed and the characters grouped all for the purpose of building them up. As a consequence the scenes could be presented perfectly only to the extent that they presented all the features that were necessary to them. When a character's position in relation to another character is important to a scene some of its strength is lost when the other character is eliminated to allow the first to be shown in a close-up. Murnau gives us a few closeups and each of them is necessary. In my opinion the most intelligent shot is that showing O'Brien terrifying Margaret Livingstone near the end of the picture. Because she had urged him to drown Janet, O'Brien, when he thinks Janet has been drowned, becomes infuriated and seeks the city woman with murder in his heart. When he encounters her the light is at his back and we can not see his face. Nor can we see Margaret's as she advances towards him with her back to the camera. But we see her lift her face to his, then turn and flee. There is a shot for our close-up hounds to study! I do not know of any other director who could have resisted showing us George's face distorted with rage and Margaret's registering terror. Murnau's treatment shows that such shots are unnecessary, as he uses the complete bodies of his characters to put over his drama. As soon as Margaret flees we know that the expression on George's face must have terrified her, and seeing the expression in a close-up would have told us no more than we learned by not seeing it. Another bit of

direction that I like is holding the camera on O'Brien for the entire time he is rowing frantically to the shore after recovering from the insanity of his idea of drowning his wife. There is drama in every stroke he makes, and Murnau sustains the drama by showing us all the strokes. All through the picture there are such examples of great intelligence applied to direction.

But What Do We Get for All the Art?

UT what is the net result of the masterly direction and the superb photography? Murnau has used his tools as skilfully as a master sculptor uses his chisels, and gives us something as cold as the marble that the sculptor uses. There is not a heart-throb in Sunrise. What is a motion picture? Is it an unfeeling thing of camera angles, lighting, sets and photography, like Sunrise, or a throbbing, living, human thing, like Seventh Heaven? One of the tools that Murnau used he passed to the hand of Frank Borzage: Janet Gaynor. In Sunrise her husband is about to drown her, and as I view the scene I admire the direction and wonder how the camera was anchored; in Seventh Heaven her husband is about to go to war and as I view the scene I cry, and a lump hurts my throat, and I can feel the spell of it again now as my pen pauses. I did not admire Borzage's direction, nor was I concerned with the camera. I forgot that I was looking at a motion picture, something that Murnau did not allow me to forget for a moment. As an object to dissect in a screen clinic Sunrise is a masterpiece; as a motion picture it is not great. When Borzage directed Janet Gaynor he explained the scenes to her, toying with her emotions until she was pathetic little Diane, and then allowed her to act the scenes as she wished, for having submerged her own personality completely in that of the character, all of the manifestations of the character's moods must of necessity be perfect acting. I would gather from Sunrise that Murnau used Janet to interpret his conception of her scenes, and did not permit her to become in reality the character she was depicting. I imagine he treated George O'Brien in the same way, but I have not the opportunity to make a comparison. Murnau's direction reflects Germanic arrogance. His players are chessmen, and he moves them as such. When O'Brien regains Janet's confidence in him, he tucks her under his arm and the two sidle along the sidewalk in a ludicrously unnatural way that would have made pedestrians pause in amazement and stare at them. Yet no one notices them. The ridiculous posture and gait are maintained until the two seat themselves in a cafe, again without creating the sensation that the entrance of two such grotesque creatures could not help creating. In the cafe sequence, though, we got our only glimpse of the real Janet Gaynor, just a flash when she rises after drinking wine. Again in the barber shop we have an entirely unnatural scene. Arthur Houseman seats himself beside

WM. K. WILLIAMSON

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Janet and begins to flirt with her in a manner so crude that it would have provoked the instant protest of every barber in the place. The spectacle of a couple married for four years stopping traffic while they embrace in the middle of the street is another one of the examples of straight movie stuff that rob the picture of all its wonderful opportunities to be poignantly human. Murnau is cold, too cold ever to give us a truly great picture. He makes two of his characters advance along the sidewalk like a pair of crabs and tells us that it is art. He puts an impossible wig on the character who should get most of our sympathy, presents her throughout as both physically and mentally unattractive and gives the impression of ordering us to worry about her because he, the mastermind, so commands. Extraordinary direction and beautiful photography are no greater in a picture than the emotions they arouse. A man who can make us cry is a greater director than one who only makes us think. When we go to a theatre we do not wish to be lectured on the art of picture-making; we wish to laugh and to cry, to become distressed over the tribulations of poor Nell, and to develop an intense hatred for the villain. In Sunrise Murnau gives an extraordinary exhibition of motion picture mechanics, but he ignores the only important thing: the soul of a motion picture.

Some Faults That Murnau Commits

COMBINATION of the Murnau mechanics and the Borzage humanity would have made Sunrise the greatest picture of all time. The German does not seem to understand people. If Sunrise had been released before Seventh Heaven it would not have established Janet Gaynor as an actress. Her characterization will not be popular throughout the world and will add nothing to her reputation. At the same time I do not believe there is anyone in Hollywood who could have done better in the part. Under Borzage's direction I believe her performance would have ranked with the one she gives in Seventh Heaven. There is everything in the role to awaken the deepest sympathy for the neglected wife, but although I am absurdly susceptible to the screen's emotional appeal, I was not moved in the slightest way by one of Janet's scenes. I believe George O'Brien's characterization was too much in monotone. We are given no opportunity of becoming acquainted with him. Perhaps it would have been easier to awaken our sympathy for his wife if we had seen him as something other than a sulky, furtive weakling, badly in need of a shave. If we are to judge their home life by what we see of it in the opening sequence, it is possible that we might view drowning as an easy way out for Janet. The opening shot of the home should have shown a happy family group, O'Brien and Janet at supper, that delicious baby in a high chair, and Bodil Rosingwhat a splendid actress she reveals herself to be in this picture!-hovering about to lend an air of peace and contentment to the scene. Then the luring whistle of the woman of the city and the spilling of something in the baby's lap to take the women from the scene, allowing O'Brien to make his escape and wreck the happiness of the home which had been planted as a happy one. I would have shown George treating the flirtation with Margaret Livingstone rather lightly until his passion for her had

been aroused, and then I would have brought on the drowning suggestion with a suddenness that would have staggered him. The transition from the happy home to the diabolical plot to ruin it would have been dramatic. As Murnau presents the sequence to us, we have a stupid clod in an unhappy home, a youth so dull and such putty in Margaret's hands that it is no triumph for her to bend him to her will. As we see him, her passion for him is not convincing. I can not understand how such an attractive girl could love such an unattractive man. And every time he kissed her I was wondering what his beard was doing to her face. Showing him so badly in need of a shave merely to lead up to the barber shop sequence which has no place in the picture, even though it is done very well, is a rather ridiculous straining for an effect. Another unconvincing scene is the storm which overturns the boat. No storm on any lake ever acted like that one. When a wind lashes a lake the waves come in orderly sequence. In no way could a solitary wave like the one that swamps the boat be produced. It was good direction, though, to show us the storm first in the city. It makes us wonder what is happening on the lake. The capsizing scene should have shown the lovers so happy in an embrace that they neglected the sail, which catches the full fury of the first blow and overturns the boat. That is the way it would have happened, and we would have been spared the absurd waves. When the men are searching the lake for Janet's body they should not hold the lanterns below their faces. They could see nothing with the lights shining in their eyes. But Sunrise is a most worthy effort, despite its faults, and Fox is to be commended for making it. It will not be a box office winner. One thing I like about it is the opportunity it gives Margaret Livingstone to do something worthy of her ability. She is a splendid actress, but has not been given many chances to prove it. Seventh Heaven was so rich in humanity that it ran twenty-two weeks at the Carthay Circle. Sunrise is so lacking in that quality that it will not run more than eight weeks.

"Wild Geese" a Great Picture

ESPITE the diligent efforts of Tiffany to ruin it with close-ups, Wild Geese comes to the screen as one of the most impressive pictures of the year. If we may absolve Phil Stone from blame for the close-ups we must credit him with having done an outstanding directorial job. He has taken a story as drab as that of White Gold and told it with a vividness and a sense of drama that grips the viewer as not more than one in a hundred pictures manages to do. His greatest achievement is the evenness of the performances. It is acted superbly throughout. Its locale is a farming community, with most of the scenes on the poorly equipped farm of Russell Simpson. The story has to do with Simpson, Belle Bennett, his wife; Eve Southern, their daughter; Wesley Barry, their son; Anita Stewart, a schoolteacher; Donald Keith, a farm boy in love with Eve, and Jason Robards, Miss Bennett's illegitimate son, in love with Miss Stewart. Simpson is miserly to the point of fanaticism, and rules his family with a refined cruelty that makes him feared and hated. His performance is a remarkable one, by long odds the greatest that I ever have seen him give. He was directed with great intelligence. He inflicts no

physical cruelty on the cowering members of his family, dominating them mentally with a severity and heartlessness that he depicts with consummate artistry, without once resorting to obvious histrionics. Simpson is not one of our outstanding headliners, but I can not think of any actor on the screen who could have given a finer performance than his. Belle Bennett, as the chief victim of the husband's persecution, has to her credit in this picture one of the most perfect performances ever presented on the screen by a woman. There is tragedy in her every expression, in her gait, and the droop of her shoulders; in her very attitude as she stands over the stove and cooks her family's meals. And Eve Southern! If this picture had come from one of the big studios and were shown in the big houses, it would give this young woman a place among the handful of girls who know how to act. In The Gaucho she is all spiritual; in Wild Geese she has that same haunting spiritual quality, but she has come to life. She is the one member of the family who rebels against the father's harshness, and defies him until each rebellion is terminated by the power of his will. I do not remember having seen Miss Southern in other than the two parts I have mentioned, but I have seen quite enough to satisfy me that her screen career will be a brilliant one if she be given half a chance. She has something that no other girl on the screen has. I commend her to any producer who has a part for a girl with youth, beauty, brains and spirituality. Anita Stewart has little to do in Wild Geese, but she takes her place in the mosaic of perfect acting. Donald Keith is an engaging youngster, and in this picture which has few light moments in it, he gives a convincing and understanding performance. Robards and Barry do the same. There are in it also a couple of youngsters, who round out the family of Simpson and Miss Bennett, and their acting preserves the atmosphere of the picture. Only a few of the productions that I have seen this year achieved the high degree of acting that makes Wild Geese notable. Such performances are possible in all pictures, but we must have directors who can produce them. Phil Stone certainly knows how to do it. I don't know him, and can't recall having seen anything else that he directed, but this one picture is quite enough to convince me that he ranks among our best directors.

Phil Stone Does a Wonderful Job

OU will gather from what I have said thus far about Wild Geese that it is the story of a family, not of one or two individuals, and that the drab background is part of it. In fact, as in White Gold, the background is in reality the menace. The picture has no star, consequently it was not up to the director to keep any player before the camera to the exclusion of another. In not one place in the entire production is an individual close-up justifiable, yet we have scores of them. It was with a feeling of pity that I watched what might have been a superb exhibition of screen art being ruined by the editing of someone who did not know that the story had a soul. Every scene should have preserved as much of the background as possible, and we never should have lost the idea that the family was an entity. But when the father, mother, and daughter come together in one of the most dramatic scenes in the picture, all we see of it is the annoy-

ing darting of the camera from one large face to another. It is a scene in which we should have seen the entire bodies of all three players for its full length and they should have acted it with their arms, legs, and backs, not only with their lips and eyes. If we condone the presence of so many close-ups there is not a single fault that can be found with Stone's direction, but if he had omitted them and told his story entirely in medium and long shots he would have to his credit to-day a picture that would have been on every list of the ten best of the year. But even with all his close-ups Stone has given us a truer motion picture than Murnau does in Sunrise. The Murnau production was long in the making, undoubtedly cost ten times what Wild Geese cost, and proclaims itself as a "song of two humans". It is mounted superbly, has an outstanding cast, extraordinary direction, and magnificent photography -and it left me unmoved. Wild Geese comes from a small lot, modestly and with no blare of trumpets, yet every foot of it gripped me, and it gripped the audience so tensely that when Russell Simpson disappeared in the mud of the swamp there was a great burst of applause that meant relief. The menace to the happiness of the family was removed, the spectre of a scandal disappeared in the slime with the man responsible for it, the suffering of Belle Bennett and Eve Southern was over, and the audience rejoiced. In my review of Sunrise I ask what a motion picture is. Wild Geese answers the question. Even though it is not as good as it might have been, it still may be too good for the bulk of the public, therefore I hazzard no guess as to how it will fare with the public, but if I were a producer I would rather have it to my credit than to have made Sunrise. The latter may be the song of two humans, but Wild Geese is the imposing anthem of a whole family. It demonstrates what every person who brings intelligence to bear on pictures knows, that great sets, milling mobs, and freak photography do not make motion pictures. What the public wants on the screen is a collection of human beings. We have the writers in Hollywood who can put human beings in their stories, men and women who can act them, and a few directors who know how to handle them, but still we rarely see a good picture because producers and supervisors who know nothing of either stories, acting or directing will not permit those who have that knowledge to display it on the screen. I do not know where Wild Geese will play in Los Angeles, but you should see it and study it. To The Spectator's growing list of exhibitor readers I commend it as one of the best pictures of the year.

"Blood Ship" Has Much to Its Credit

THE BLOOD SHIP is a worthwhile picture. It is elemental, and it does us good to get down to the bedrock of human emotions once in a while. The commonest effort that is made to reach it confines itself to coming as close to elemental sexual passion as the censors will allow. Columbia had the good fortune to hit on something that it could make as raw as it liked without coming within the sphere of action of the censor boards. There is not a great deal of art in the production in addition to that for which the cameraman was responsible, and the picture is not as good as it could have been, but I enjoyed every minute of it. George B. Seitz's generally

excellent direction is marred frequently by the evidence that he displays that most of his grouping was done with regard for the camera. He got away from it in most of his long shots, but in his medium shots and close-ups he was too painstaking in his efforts to keep all his characters a facing the camera, a common fault and one that makes scenes unnatural. Technically the picture is not what it should have been. Walter James, who plays Captain Swope excellently, is shown making a cat-o'-nine-tails, the thongs so heavily burdened with metal that an experimental blow with it makes deep abrasions in the surface of a table, yet later he lashes Hobart Bosworth with it until he is completely exhausted, yet Bosworth's shirt is not torn. The blows he delivered with such a weapon would have killed Bosworth, which is demonstrated later when Bosworth kills James with the same weapon. James is picked up the moment he dies and his body is as stiff as a ramrod. Rigor mortis seems to have set in with extraordinary promptness. While I have no quarrel with the critics who were so generous in their praise of Bosworth's performance, I feel that they did not do full justice to the excellent work of all the members of the cast. Quite as commendable as Bosworth's performance are those of James and Fred Kohler, both of whom inject a callosity into their cruelty in a masterly manner. Dick Arlen's pleasing screen personality registers agreeably, but I can't see that he contributes anything to the story except providing Jacqueline Logan with someone to love, a necessary ingredient, I'll grant you, but in such a gory picture we might have had a more bloodthirsty hero. James Bradbury, as the Knitting Swede, gave me a glimpse of a character man I never noticed before. Someone should give him a chance in a bigger part. Miss Logan takes full advantage of the few opportunities her part provides. I am quite sure that she will give a good account of herself in all the important roles De Mille has in sight for her. Arthur Rankin is capital in a small character part. He is one of the best young character men we have. Syd Crossley is listed as a Cockney, but his spoken titles are about as far from the Cockney dialect as they could get. However, his acting is excellent. There is a colored gentleman in The Blood Ship cast who rejoices in the name of Blue Washington, and who certainly can act. As I watched his appearances on the screen I wondered why producers do not provide more prominent parts for negroes and cast in them some of the excellent colored talent available. Quite often we see white men playing blackface parts, which becomes ridiculous when you consider how many clever fellows we have who could play them without make-up. Columbia is to be congratulated upon giving us such a stirring picture as this one. I suppose the fact that it is attracting attention will be responsible for an epidemic of such pictures, none of which will be as good as the original. That's the way it generally is.

"Crowd" Subjected to Too Much Supervision

THE happiest ending a picture can have is one showing a sympathetic character achieving an ambition. Things in life are relative. We can derive as much satisfaction from watching Chico in Seventh Heaven rise from a sewer cleaner to a street washer as we could by seeing a bank cashier in another picture become the presi-

dent of the institution for which he works. Chico's one ambition was to become a street washer. He becomes one. His ambition is achieved, and if the story had been one of his ambition it could have ended happily when he received his appointment. The fault of most motion pictures is that they are not content with showing a reasonable achievement of an ambition. Given a picture in which the main interest centers around a bootblack's ambition to own the stand at which he works, the culmination of his dream is not considered to be sufficient; we must fade-out on the hero owning all the stands in the state and controlling all the factories that make shoeblacking. In The Crowd King Vidor made a masterly picture which faded out on the central character realizing an ambition for which he had struggled and suffered. He is shown as one of the crowd; he loses his job, and the chief interest of the picture is his struggle against adversity, which ends happily when he gets his job back. As Vidor shot it, it was a poignant and powerful picture, a tremendous one that would have made a deep impression on the public. I have seen it three times, but I have refrained from reviewing it until I see it in the form in which it is to be released At the first showing it was a great picture; as I saw it the last time it was a poor one. It is a shame to watch the way it is being ruined through some supervisor's misconception of the public's taste. As Vidor finished it the audience would have been satisfied fully because the man got his job back, leaving it to presume that his struggles were over and that he would live happily ever after. The ending struck just the right note and left me under the spell of a great picture. I had been so interested in the man's struggles, his suffering had awakened my sympathy to such a degree that I sighed with relief when his employer reinstated him. At that time it was evident that Vidor had shot too much footage, for the strength of some of the sequences was sacrificed in bringing the whole picture within the required length, but, even so, it was a truly notable picture. I was appalled when I saw it the last time. Someone on the Metro lot-I can not believe it was Irving Thalberg-did not consider that Vidor's powerful ending had enough box-office appeal. Another was tacked on. It shows our hero living in a mansion paid for by the huge sums he received from writing advertising slogans. The whole idea of Vidor's conception is ruined. He made a great picture and it has become a blah one. To accommodate the added footage the cutting is so sharp that more sequences are harmed. Before we had properly developed causes and effects; now we have causes without the effects, and effects without the causes. It is deplorable that such inspired work as Vidor put into the picture originally had to be subjected to the manhandling of supervisors who could not understand what it was all about. This is not a review of The Crowd. I will review it after it comes off the operating table.

"The Crystal Cup" Is Not so Terrible

OST of the reviews of The Crystal Cup that I have read criticized the story on the score that its premise was faulty, the contention being that the girl's hatred of men was unreasonable. Aren't all hatreds unreasonable? And can we account for hatreds? I hate lip-sticks, and I used to play golf at Coronado with a

retired British officer who hated meadow-larks. I do not think it is more unreasonable for a girl to hate men than it is for a retired British officer to hate meadow-larks. A brief sequence at the opening of The Crystal Cup plants the reason for Dorothy Mackail's hatred, and I cannot see that it is not quite plausible, thereby reconciling me to the theme of the story. My quarrel with the picture comes later, when Dorothy marries Rocky Fellowes for no good reason at all. After the ridiculous wedding my interest in the picture was nil. The story itself thenceforth carries the implication that Dorothy made a mistake, and concerns itself with getting her out of it. As a theme for a story, retrieving a mistake is only as strong as the motive that is responsible for the mistake being made. In this case there was no reason for the mistake being made. A neighbor drops in and tells the girl that she should have either a chaperone or a husband, and without any other impelling motive being established the girl selects a husband. It is a silly thing for her to do, and still sillier for the man to fall for it. Had Dorothy been forced into the marriage by a set of circumstances she was powerless to resist, we might have had some sympathy for her, and we would have given moral support to her efforts to break the matrimonial cords that bound her, but it is too much to ask us to become wrought up over the misfortunes of a girl who had no reason for accumulating the misfortunes. Except for its story weakness and the vile manner in which its titles are punctuated, The Crystal Cup is a worthy production and reflects credit on the First National organization. John Francis Dillon did a fine job of directing except in a few spots where he adhered to the movie formula. One of these is when Fellowes is shown in bed immediately after he has been shot, apparently in the breast. He talks with Dorothy. His face is cheerful and there is nothing to indicate that he has been wounded. If I had been directing the scene I would have shown a spasm of pain appearing on Fellowes' face at least a couple of times during the conversation. In course of my picture-viewing I encounter scores of examples of a lack of thought by directors weakening scenes. They are scenes which are deemed to be unimportant as they are inserted merely to advance the story and apparently not much attention is paid to shooting them. There is in a picture no such thing as an unimportant scene, and at all times during shooting the most important scene is the one that is being shot at any given moment. If as much attention be given to the manner in which the butler serves the guests with cocktails as is given to the hero finding his wife in the arms of the heavy, we automatically get a perfect picture. In The Crystal Cup we have another impossible ending. Dorothy and Jack Mulhall marry and are shown in the lobby of a hotel. They walk across the crowded lobby gazing into each other's eyes and no one notices what silly asses they are making of themselves. They enter an elevator and clinch as it ascends. All the way through the picture they are planted as people of refinement, and in the closing scenes are shown as extremely common. But I must credit the picture with showing us Dorothy Mackail at her best. She gives a really commendable performance. Jack Mulhall does not have a great deal to do but is pleasing as always. That splendid character actress, Edythe Chapman, adds a fine note to the picture.

Not Clever Enough To Be a Good Farce

-HE Metro mill has ground out another, Mixed Marriages. Harry Rapf seems determined to give us a clever farce and shows a disposition to stick at it until he does. I can not see that he is making any progress. This one is another Aileen Pringle-Lew Cody production with the structure of a farce, but totally lacking in that degree of cleverness a farce must attain to escape being a woeful affair. I saw it at a preview, and perhaps the weaknesses that were apparent then will not appear in it when it is released. However it is permissible to discuss them as my comments have general application. I never saw a picture with a more impossible set of titles. They were of the wise-cracking variety, and not by the most nimble gyrations of one's imagination could he delude himself into the belief that the different characters were speaking, as all the titles, no matter by whom spoken, reflected but one mentality. Of course, I know that generally all the titles in a picture are written by one person, but the titles themselves should not betray that fact. When we find that robust comedian, Bert Roach, and that dainty little actress, Mary McAllister, indulging in exactly similar flows of wit their characterizations lose their individualities. Pouring out the conversation of Aileen and Lew Cody from the same mold results in a monotonous and characterless production. Hobart Henley directed the picture in a meritorious manner and I am satisfied that it was ruined after it was taken out of his hands, although it would have taken inspired direction to have made much of such a weak story. Most of the action was shot at La Jolla, and scenically the picture is a delight, the cameraman being responsible for many beautiful shots. But as I saw it, it misses by a wide margin the quality that a farce must have. Another set of titles might redeem it. Despite the big names in the cast it is Mary McAllister's picture. Every time I have reviewed a film in which she appeared I have commented on her work and this picture demonstrates that my high estimate of her ability is justified. I like her because she so obviously is a little thoroughbred and because she troups with enthusiasm and intelligence. I believe that if she were given half a chance she would become a great favorite. The screen can do with a few more girls who are refined and at the same time give evidence of having a sense of humor. Bert Roach contributes a fine comedy performance to Mixed Marriages, and George K. Arthur also will be responsible for some laughs. Miss Pringle and Cody have roles that to me are

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Feminine Gifts of Distinction

EVERY GIFT CAREFULLY SELECTED FOR STYLE AND QUALITY silly, and I could not work up any great enthusiasm for them. I do not wish to give the impression that the production is entirely without merit. It isn't. I derived considerable amusement from it, despite its terrible titles, and if they are improved I believe the picture will do nicely at the box-office. Farces will never be entirely successful until they reflect some definite personality. The machine methods of the big studios never will produce them. This one looks as if if were supervised to death. I was amused to see "Gawd" in one of its titles. That will never do! The word is on the celebrated list of "don'ts" that Louis B. Mayer drew up. He should post the list on one of his own bulletin boards.

"French Dressing" a Nice Little Thing

RENCH DRESSING is going to do well for First National. Allan Dwan directed it. He did not put into it all the skill that made Summer Bachelors such a delightful picture, but he has done quite well enough to make it entertaining throughout. It is notable for its splendid performances and its beautiful photography. There are some shots in it that are exquisite examples of composition, lighting and camera work, and many sets that reflect the greatest credit on the art directors responsible for them. When I see such a picture I regret that it was not done in color. Had French Dressing been shot in Technicolor it would have been one of the greatest treats ever presented on the screen. The story starts in this country and moves over to Paris, whither Lois Wilson goes to divorce her husband, played by H. B. Warner. Those who know their Paris are going to find the atmosphere of the foreign sequences more movie than Parisian. This fact will not hurt the picture in this country, but abroad it may be criticized adversely on account of it. Harry D'Arrast seems to be the only one directing pictures here who can make a French social gathering look like one. The first shot in the production shows the lobby of a Boston hotel, and later we see the lobby of a Paris hotel. In reality there is a vast difference in the atmosphere of two such hotels, but in the picture there is none. I have been in a good many hotel lobbies in Paris, but never saw the life in one even faintly resembling what Dwan gives us. But, after all, it is not a matter of great importance. Dwan had a splendid little cast to work with and handled it with rare intelligence. Miss Wilson, Warner, Lilyan Tashman and Clive Brook are the only ones with important roles, and each of them delivers a performance that is a gem. Brook's is the most interesting, and he probably will be credited with carrying off the acting honors, although no one could pick a flaw in the work of the other three. The story is intriguing. There are two triangles. In this country Miss Tashman starts the wrecking of the married life of Lois and Harry Warner, and in Paris, where Lilyan endeavors to bring the two together again, Brook steps in and bids fair to make the separation permanent. And still there is no heavy in the picture. By an interesting twist at the end each character becomes a sympathetic one, and the fadeout leaves everyone happy. When I saw French Dressing it sagged in the middle, as nearly all pictures do before they receive the final application of the shears, and I imagine that the fault will have been corrected by this time. I hope that in the pruning process some of the unnecessary close-ups will come out.

Several scenes were weakened by them. The story is slim, and the fact that the picture is interesting is due entirely to the clever manner in which Dwan handled both it and his cast. It bears out what I often have contended: that given good actors and good direction, the story is not important. There is nothing in French Dressing to get excited about, but it ambles along amiably from one attractive setting to another, each sequence acted with skill and directed with intelligence, until the whole thing becomes delightfully entertaining for its entire length. And in spite of the fact that it deals with domestic infelicity and divorce there is not a foot of it that will make a New England spinster blush. Dwan's direction throughout is in the best of taste.

DONALD has a weakness for fan publications. From them he gathered the impression that the feature picture was amusing and entertaining, and as a preview also was announced, we went to Chotiner's La Brea theatre and sat through Publicity Madness and the first few feet of the preview picture which was one of Sam Bischoff's dog pictures which I reviewed in The Spectator of February nineteenth of this year. Have you seen Publicity Madness? You haven't? Well, well! You are neglecting your picture education. Until you see it you will not know how rotten a picture can be. The Fox people have me puzzled. They give us masterpieces like Seventh Heaven and Sunrise, a vulgar monstrosity like The Loves of Carmen, and a total loss like Publicity Madness. This publicity thing is without question the rottenest picture I ever have seen, and I have seen some awful ones. Eddie Lowe is the hero and he is characterized as a vulgar, smart-Aleck low-brow without one redeeming feature. Lois Moran is the girl and was forced to play a silly, empty-headed flapper who falls in love with the impossible-to-love Eddie. Anita Loos is credited with the story, but I am confident that whatever she wrote did not reach the screen. She is sane, and the story is crazy. Albert Ray directed, but I do not hold him wholly responsible. No one man could make a picture as terrible as this one is. You can imagine how cheerful it was to sit through it and then find that the preview picture was made almost a year ago. I since have been told that fake previews constitute a Chotiner habit. It is well to know it.

I DO not see why such a fuss was kicked up over the request of the American Atheist Society that God should be eliminated from pictures. The Society does not believe in God, and its request was in line with its belief. The request of believers that atheism be banned from the screen is no more unreasonable than the counter request. But both requests are silly. The screen has neither politics nor religion. Dictating to us what we must believe is not its mission. The only way to treat such a demand as that of the atheists is to ignore it, as all demands to limit the scope of the screen should be ignored.

FROM time to time I've had considerable to say about the ignorant manner in which motion picture titles are punctuated. All the faults are not committed by the makers of the features. Recently I saw a reel of jokes put out by the Los Angeles Times. The punctuation was awful.

We Exchange Letters with a Discerning Reader

I am hoping that you will eventuate into the Moses who will lead the children of Hollywood out of the Cinema Wilderness. There are a great many admirers—myself, among the number—of your untrameled, unconfined modes of expression. I am hoping, also, that you are not too much of an idealist and that you have not undertaken a purely altruistic task without having properly summarized the psychology of those whom you seek to defend. In other words, I seek to protect you against the disappointment which always comes from a—let us say—partially defeated purpose.

In other words, what lesson in experience can teach the majority of actors common sense and what free and independent spirit can lead an advance when fear, ignorance, lack of perception and self control exist to such a great degree among those whom he seeks to lead?

Even though your modes of expression are more fearless and your logic and proof a million times more convincing, what can you hope to achieve more than has been achieved by other spirits who have preceded you? What was your fundamental reason for attempting to defend those who are quite satisfied to drift for a day, a year, and then pass into the oblivion many of them deserve?

If, in your organization, there are one or two men actuated by the same purpose as yourself, you have a chance to accomplish something, but are there?

As you know, there is no vicissitude which can defeat the man inspired by a lofty purpose. If those whom you seek to defend could be found nightly studying their profession, concentrating with sincerity and earnestness of purpose on their success, then I would be prepared to say that they needed a champion. Therefore, what series of lessons can you publish in your periodical which would be calculated to produce THAT result?

Can you publish an editorial which will convince the rank and file of the motion picture industry that there is a million times more pleasure and satisfaction and RESULT in sitting at home quietly and thinking of what procedure must be taken on the morrow; concentrating on it and thus accomplishing it?

Can you publish an editorial which will convince these people that constant gadding about, nightly "parties" and asinine sentimentality and a selling of personality is not the mode whereby earnest and sincere artists in any business succeed? Why not educate these people into a change of thought and a consequent change of perspective?

Even the lowest of the predatory, merciless film barons can appreciate and give audience to—a lady or a gentleman; in fact, these men, mostly ignorant, uncultured and unhappy, seek that very mode of education.

Proceeding to the heads of the industry: Most of these men had a desperate, bitter, merciless battle with life. There is not a single one of them who has not drunk the cup of poverty to the very dregs. The desperate, bitter and merciless battle they had has, in turn, rendered them desperate, bitter and merciless and there is not a single one of them who does not realize that the money—which is his God—is not and never can be a god and that the self gratification he worships also is a quick and sure method of disintegration.

Every one of these men knows that the parasites and hypocrites in his pay would cut his throat tomorrow morning. Therefore, what self-respecting Hollywood artist would wish to change places with these unfortunates?

It seems to me that you can accomplish a great deal. It seems to me that, by a process of welding together these two elements, your result is sure and certain. It is only by this method of appeal that anything can be accomplished. Certainly, the film barons will fight and bribe and steal and snarl over their miserably secured mess of cinema pottage until the business is in shreds, unless some such spirit as yourself can introduce a feeling between those whom you defend and those whom you so truthfully assail.

In the picture business, there has never been a captain. There has never been any man strong enough or clean enough to secure that respect which is so essential to harmony. There has never been any effort to foster the business. Let us hope that, by a process of elimination, this MAN will appear.

In your last issue, you speak, very convincingly, of the injustice done to Raymond Griffith, by Paramount. You state that you do not know the cause of the quarrel. The cause was, of course, MONEY. An actor's earning capacity is or should be gauged on the success of his pictures, and would you be prepared to say that the salary paid to Griffith was not sufficient, even though Griffith thought he was worth more?

I imagine the books of any corporation would be open to any prominent star who wishes to investigate them. Have you ever stopped to consider the process which is necessary to get some women stars to work at all; as in the case of the now defunct Theda Bara and the more recent Pola Negri? What do you think would have happened if either of these foolish women had been sufficiently educated to realize that there are some more human beings in the world besides herself and her silly little cinema success of a day?

This is where you come in, if you wish to be a real champion of both sides of the industry, a mediator, a welder, THE MAN who MAY bring a degree of harmony and peace into a perfectly good business which is, evidently, staggering on to something closely approaching disintegration.

Sincerely yours,
A READER.

Y DEAR Reader:

Your letter interests me. It is an intelligent contribution to a discussion which I have been forced to carry on by myself, as those in the industry with brains enough to add anything to it, have been singularly backward in raising an argument in their own behalf.

You ask what was my fundamental reason for defending the interests of screen workers. I was going down Sunset the other day and saw a dog harrassing a cat, which it had backed into a porch. I was not acquainted with either combatant, and had no interest in their antecedents or families, but I pulled the dog off, boxed his ears and sent him yelping down the street. Then I pried a screen loose and dropped the kitten into a room, without

being sure that he lived in that particular house, or if he wanted to be in-doors, even if it were his home. What fundamental reason did I have for entering into that dispute? I love dogs even more than I do cats, but every time two of them get into a scrap I'm on the cat's side because it is the weaker opponent. Even when one of my dogs chases a stray cat I cheer for the cat and then punish the dog for his misguided exuberance.

Fundamental thoughts are not conscious thoughts, nor are fundamental reasons the outgrowth of a conscious line of reasoning. If we pursue a fundamental reason backward to its lair I think that we will find it to be nothing but instinct. Instinct being a part of us for which we are not responsible, and over which we have no control, we can not explain anything we do in its name, nor can we claim credit for ourselves if that which we do is something meritorious. You ask me what I hoped to achieve. How far would the world get if things were dared only when success was assured? Even an effort that fails carries a cause a little farther forward if it were made intelligently.

But you ask me to reason out calmly something that was not founded on calm reasoning, to tell you the weight of something that I did not weigh. I took the side of the screen personnel against the producers just as I did that of the cat against the dog, and with as little thought of reward, and with much less hope of achieving anything.

In all the discussion there has been on the subject I do not want you to lose sight of the fact that the one thing that kept my torch burning was the producers' black list, their boycotting of players and denying them a right to make a living. One of my fundamentals cries out against that abuse. It is what started me and sustained in me that amount of indignation that man must feel to put vigor into the championing of a cause. As I began to enquire into it the other abuses came to light and my campaign absorbed them.

There never was a time when I felt that there was hope of The Spectator accomplishing anything by itself. I was not blinded by my own estimate of its potency. The best I hoped for was to use The Spectator to muddy the water until things came to the surface to be skimmed off and put into the hands of those who could use them as weapons. I started out to crack every head that appeared and to create a devil of a rumpus generally. First I wanted to take the industry out of its sycophantic mood. It regarded the Schencks and Mayers and Laskys with so much awe that it shuddered at every suggestion of combating them. My first duty as I saw it was to strip these men of some of the godlike qualities that their employees attributed to them. Imagine taking seriously a man like Louis B. Mayer, who rides around in a car with a huge "FIRE" sign on it in scarlet letters! It would be more to the point if Betty Bolton had a "FUDGE" sign on her car.

As proof of the fact that I never considered that The Spectator could do everything by itself I point to the presence in Hollywood now of a staff writer and a staff artist of one of the big national publications who are here for the purpose of giving world-wide prominence to the tempest which I have done my best to stir up in our own little teapot. As soon as I started to stir things up I corresponded with this publication, telling it of my own impotency and urging it to enter upon a crusade to inject

In the Supreme Court of Public Opinion

Los Angeles, Calif.

DECEMBER 26th

Case of

THE PEOPLE

VS.

TIM WHELAN

The Defendant is charged with furnishing unusual entertainment by being the

SCENARIST and
COMEDY SPECIALIST

--- on ---

MARY PICKFORD'S
"MY BEST GIRL"

Trial to Be Held at

UNITED ARTISTS THEATRE

Beginning December 26, 1927

Before a Jury of

THE PUBLIC

decency into the motion picture industry. In this I have been successful.

I do not know if you are acquainted with the fact that representatives of the United States Department of Justice are now in Los Angeles investigating screen conditions. Uncle Sam is tenacious. He goes at things slowly, but he never lets go. Probably six months will elapse before you hear anything about the investigation, but at the end of that time the whole nation will smell the mess that he uncovers. He is not as much impressed with "FIRE" signs on automobiles as are those who ride behind them.

The Spectator, and The Spectator only, is responsible for Uncle Sam broadening the scope of his investigation to embrace blacklisting. At first he was concerned only with the rottenness of the methods of distribution, but when his representatives arrived in Hollywood The Spectator laid before them information that caused them to widen their activities.

The fight is now up to Uncle Sam, and he is a good fighter.

I do not regard myself as even a potential Moses, but I've always had the idea that The Spectator might play the role. The pages always are open to contributors who have anything to say, and I particularly welcome opinions which differ with mine. I've left plenty of openings. I've even gone to the length of advancing arguments which I later will tear to pieces myself if no one volunteers to do it for me. In the last Spectator I advised screen workers to harrass the producers, and one of the weapons I suggested they might use was trades unionism. I advocated it merely in an effort to stir the personnel into doing something—anything—to prove that it was alive.

But if it ever tries actually to unionize the studios The Spectator will line up with the producers in fighting such a step.

I urged screen actors to put up a fight against the admission of any more foreign talent, and if they ever organize and do such a thing, they may find The Spectator against them.

The welding process which you suggest can come only when both sides to it are equally malleable. It can not come while producers regard themselves as gods who are above the ordinary rules of fair play and decency. When they have been punished for their criminal disregard of the restraint-of-trade law, both as regards the distribution of pictures and the blacklisting of those whose services become part of the productions made for inter-state commerce; when they have been taught to know that decency can be forced on them, and that their employees are as important in the scheme of things as they are—then both sides can dwell near one another in peace and quiet.

The whole idea of The Spectator has been to hasten the time when this peace and quiet will come. It is not going to tire its readers with many more long arguments, but will open its pages gladly to those with anything to say. There are many brilliant writers in Hollywood more directly interested in The Spectator's campaign than I am. I will not hear from any of them. But to them I pass their fight. You are one of them.

The Spectator will devote itself to building up a large exhibitor circulation so that its influence in the industry will be great. The producers are going to be forced to be fair, but they can not be trusted to keep a promise unless

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Place Your Order Early, to Be Delivered Xmas.

Edith M. Roberts

Rose Shop

6432 Hollywood Boulevard We Deliver — HE. 0966 they are watched. It seems to me that it is up to The Spectator to do the watching.

There are many things in your letter which are so complete in themselves that they invite no comment from me. I thank you, and wish you and Mrs. Reader a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

WELFORD BEATON.

FROM one reader comes a complaint that I do not review enough pictures. He cites The American Beauty as one that I overlooked and he wants to know if I think it is as bad as he thinks it is. I think it is worse. Billie Dove registered so emphatically in The Marriage Clause that she can act that she became a star, and she has appeared in a succession of pictures that gave her no opportunity to act. The American Beauty is perhaps the worst of the series. After seeing it and before I wrote a review of it, I viewed The Auction Mart, in which Billie comes back as an actress and gives a commendable performance. I thought that perhaps First National had reformed and that hereafter this talented and beautiful girl was to be given vehicles worthy of her ability, making it charitable to forget The American Beauty. have reviewed it, in the light of her later success, would have been like drawing a very dead herring across a pleasant and promising path, consequently I dismissed it from my mind. I remember, though, one particularly stupid bit of direction. Lloyd Hughes sits in his room some distance from the closed door. Billie is in the hall at a considerable distance from the door, yet the two of them carry on a conversation in an ordinary tone. It would have been impossible for them to hear one another. The picture is full of such absurdities. But its greatest fault is that it is about nothing. Why First National did not realize that it had no story is what surprises me.

A FTER Christmas, when I again become combative, I am going to argue with Doug about the prominent part cigarettes play in his characterization in The Gaucho. You see the same thing in many pictures—a man forever chewing on a cigar, another always smoking a pipe. My opinion is that anything that interferes with the play of a man's features detracts from his characterization. I could not take my eyes off Doug's cigarette, as I find myself continually gazing at the pipe and the cigar. I have no objection to them, as I am smoking a pipe as I write, but the mere fact that they distract my attention proves that as far as I am concerned they detract from the scenes in which they appear. When I am watching Doug in a love scene the romance in it is lessened somewhat if I specu-

LES BATES

WELFORD BEATON in THE SPECTATOR:

"This part (in *Buck Privates*) should provide Les Bates with more important roles than he has been playing. He is an excellent comedian."

1150 N. Ogden Drive Phone GRANITE 8246

late upon the probability of the girl's nose being burned by his cigarette. There are plenty of less distracting ways of building up characterizations—a man continually running his fingers through his hair, juggling with a key ring, fiddling with a watch fob, whittling a stick, rolling pieces of paper, and many other such little things that help to develop personalities, but which do not come within our direct line of vision when we are studying a man's face to learn his mental reaction to the scene he is playing.

THERE is absent from the pages of this Spectator considerable advertising that was offered it. At this season of the year picture people are so accustomed to being held up for Christmas advertising which does them no good, but which is placed with publications on the theory that it buys immunity from adverse criticism during the ensuing year, that it has become a habit to draw

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This is not only a PARA-DISE for the trout fisherman, but it offers recreation for his entire family and friends, such as trout fishing every day in the year, horseback riding, winter sports, and other recreation.

For information inquire 1110 Guaranty Building, Hollywood Telephone GLadstone 2115 up a list of publications and amounts of bribes without waiting for the high pressure salesmen to appear. In this way The Spectator found itself on several of the lists and word was sent to us to come around and get the advertising and the checks. But while we appreciate the compliment of recognition we do not believe it is a legitimate way for a screen paper to make money, hence we did not go around. We have offered screen people an opportunity to help us build up an exhibitor circulation because we believe it will do them as much good as it will do us, but we refuse to blackmail them by virtually threatening them with adverse criticism for the next year if they do not buy advertising space in a Christmas number.

SOME enthusiastic people of Beverly Hills are urging Will Rogers to become a candidate for the United States Senate. They tell him he could be elected. I believe he could. He is about the only great humorist whom American people ever have taken seriously. He is known to be clean and is regarded as being one of the best posted men in the country on national affairs. In the Senate he would be listened to and could do the state great good. He would represent it worthily. But what a fool of a thing it would be for him to run! If he does, I hope he'll get the licking of the century as punishment for trading the comforts of his Beverly Hills home for a Washington flat, our climate for that of the Atlantic seaboard, the free and untrammelled existence he now lives for the turmoil and murkiness of politics. Being a senator would add nothing to his stature. I like him too well to wish him success as a candidate, and I respect him too much to believe he ever will be one. And besides, he and I are plotting something that a senatorial campaign would disrupt.

Let us suppose that in a picture a man witnesses a murder and that later he is put on the stand to testify to what he saw. It is a problem how to register his complete testimony, as a repetition of the scenes showing the murder would be tiresome. But that is the only way I have seen it done, and the repeated scenes show the witness in them as he was in the first shots. Should he be in the repeated shots? When he is on the stand he is telling what he saw, not what the camera saw. He could not see himself. By placing the camera on every spot where the witness stood when he saw the murder committed the cutbacks would be a literal recital of his evidence, and it would relieve the repeated scenes of a tendency to bore the audience. Sometimes you see it done that way, but not often.

A Year's Subscription to
THE SPECTATOR
would make an ideal
Christmas Gift

It's not to late to phone HE 2801

THIS issue of The Spectator was put in the post office on its regular day, which at a time in the year when normal mail conditions prevail would assure its delivery in Los Angeles and Hollywood on Thursday and in Beverly Hills on Friday. But I'm afraid it will be later than that in reaching you, for which please blame Santa Claus, not our mailing department.

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I shall in each issue of GAG, PLOT AND TITLE also devote a number of pages to my latest and best vaudeville material; and let me say right here there's many a valuable suggestion for photoplay producers in vaudeville monologues, patter acts and situation bits.

For the same reason I shall include in each issue of GAG, PLOT AND TITLE an album supplement, entitled BEST BITS FROM BACK BUDGETS. *Probably you*

know that I have for many years published that very successful comedy year-book, MADISON'S BUDGET. Practically all back issues are out of print and command high prices. This supplement will provide month by month the cream of this material to those not fortunate enough to have preserved a file.

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THE STORY OF THE STAR

By Madeleine Matzen

THE old writers are getting a fearful panning in this magazine—and most of them deserve it. By "old writers" I mean those who have been writing for the screen for many years, those who are at the top and are receiving huge sums for turning out adaptations and continuities—most of which are not worth the expense of filming. I have said repeatedly both in print and in conversation that the "old writers" are in a rut and I have been called for saying this by different editors who announce in a friendly way that writers do not get in a rut. Ah, don't they!

Let us take the case of writers in

general.

Most of the so-called popular writers of today are those who write with magazine policies in mind. That is they write according to recipe and forget inspiration. They turn out a prodigious amount of stuff for the cheap magazines, they publish a novel at least twice a year, they grow rich and comfortable—and it is not a good thing to grow rich and comfortable in one's mind, it isn't good for the mind. No true artist ever held a smug point of view—if he did he could see no farther than the end of his nose and so his ideas would not be worth writing about.

Each year the popular writers receive larger prices for their work and each year their work grows more stereotyped, more banal. Meanwhile what of the unpopular writers? I can only cite the cases of Willa Cather, of Knut Hamsun and of D. H. Lawrence, three of the greatest writers in the English language. Have they sold their vision, their gift, their birthright for wealth? They have not! Policies and the making of huge fortunes mean little to them—they have something real and worth while to say—and nothing (not even editor's policies) is going to prevent them from saying it. For years they lived on a pittance — today they are acclaimed. They have given something to the world—and they will be remembered in generations to come when the names and work of the popular authors are forgotten. What price glory? Not much in the way of dollars—but infinite satisfaction in self expression and happiness in one's work—what more could any man or woman ask?

Now let's take the case of the photodramatists.

We will consider the few, the very few "old writers" who are struggling along under desperate odds with unfair contracts binding them to work for certain studios. For so much money per week or story they agree to turn out a satisfactory script. But the satisfaction must be the producer's not the writer's.

The result-if even the faint or flickering shadow of a new idea, a "different" characterization, a new twist or slant to the plot makes its appearance the treatment or continuity (whichever it happens to be) it is rejected. A new treatment, or a new continuity must be written. By the time the material has been written and rewritten, by the time every person in power has interpolated their ideas the poor author has a patched, a torn and mutilated thing on his hand —a product for which he alone receives the blame. Under these conditions how can any one with personality, imagination or brains hope to retain his enthusiasm? And enthusiasm goes hand in hand with inspiration-and without inspiration how can anyone hope to write anything worth writing?

Why is it that a script has to be rewritten and mangled beyond recognition? To suit the limitations of the star! And God and the fans know that few of our stars can act! Most of them can pose, make faces and be cute (this applies to the men as well as the women) but how few actors like Jannings have we developed; how few actors like Pole or Gorbo?

actresses like Pola, or Garbo?

When I asked Murnau about our actors he blushed, then he mentioned Jean Hersholt, McLaglen, Janet Gaynor and Chaplin—he confessed to a great curiosity to see Langdon—the rest—I questioned him shamelessly and he answered, "Do not ask me please!"

They tell me that the life of a popular motion picture star is five years. Why should it be so brief? Acting is an art that grows with experience. Jannings' art has grown and will (producers permitting) continue to grow. I believe that Pola's best work will be in the future—and possibly Chaplin's too. Why? Because Jannings demands screen plays that are true, that mean something—story policies are nothing to him! Chaplin is always the explorer, he is always trying for new ideas regardless of the box-office—and I believe that Pola has grown weary of old story policies. She is too great an artist to be fooled by such talk for long.

Why is the life of our stars a mat-

ter of five years?

Because most of them are too lazy to work out of their limitations and work up to the story. Instead they demand that the story be cut and trimmed to fit them. And in the cutting and trimming process the very soul and being of the story is lost.

What chance has the thoughtful

What chance has the thoughtful writer when such a condition exists? Why think anyway—if you are writing for the screen?

Of course the majority of the big writers accept conditions—they cater to the producers' demands and to the limitations of the star. They lose their enthusiasm—and they turn out dull and banal scripts. Who is to blame? Echo answers, "The Producers"!

There are two bright spots in Colleen Moore's career So Big and Twinkle Toes. The rest is too monotonously ingenue, too over sweetly cute. Five years is all. And yet Colleen can act! Why not give her worth while stories, give her something to do, let her grow! At this rate she will be forgotten in a few years.

Not long ago a gay, a light and colorful mind appeared in pictures. A young man called Paul Bern chose a story and directed it-it was a fresh, a new thing called Open All Night. To be sure he did not write the storybut he had the sense to select it and in screening it he caught and held (without regard for policies) the spirit and light humor of the story. The story did not make a lot of money and so the producer descended upon him with wrath. After that he made (to please the producer) some dreadful pictures like The Dressmaker of Paris—then he gave up. Later he bobbed up at one of the big studios in an advisory capacity. He lasted only a short time. Why? He had ideas—new ones. Such a thing must be stopped at once! One must consider the stars!

What a stupid policy—to consider the stars. Most of them are not worth considering. Why not make the stars do a little considering? Why not make the stars consider the story? If the part makes too great a demand on their intelligence, if they lack the brains needed to play the role—why not find an actor to take their place? Hollywood has in its extra and small-bit ranks many men and women who CAN act, given half a chance. And the public has never failed to approve of splendid acting.

Isn't it better to turn out finely acted, well written photoplays that give the producer a fair return on his money than to make two box-office successes a year and forty dull flops—or to waste several millions on a super production that is in no sense superior?

I believe in many instances that the box-office bugaboo was invented by producers who are overly greedy, who have no qualms at all about giving the

GOULD'S

THE BOYS' SHOP OF HOLLYWOOD

6735-37 HOLLYWOOD BLVD. HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

public mental indigestion and who are not sufficiently educated or intelligent to acknowledge their own limitations.

Occasionally a star has misgivings about his or her career and refuses to play in the stories bought for him. Then there are law suits and misunderstandings all round, the producer calls the star "ungrateful". In the end the star gives in and from then on the stigma of "temperamental" is attached to his name. It is almost impossible to buck the shortsightedness of the producers.

All this is destructive criticism—but here is one constructive thought. Why don't the "old writers" (the ones who are not completely broken by policies) band together and force through a new type of contract? A contract in which their ideas be given the consideration due them because of the amount of salary they are being

paid. Why pay huge salaries to people for hack work-and work sans ideas is hack work?

And new writers are clamoring at the gates-sooner or later they will get in. And the new generation have learned by watching the pioneerswill they be broken by talk of policies, by the limitations of the stars? think not! They are fresh and enthusiastic, they are clear visioned and spirited. If only the "old writers" (the ones who are still bucking conditions, the ones who have a shred of enthusiasm left) if only they would open the gate and let them in. Then shoulder to shoulder they might force issues. The dissatisfied stars might join the ranks.

Why not have worth while photo-plays? If the producers are blind, why not find others to take their places, others who are not blind or ruled by politics and the advice of relatives?

bother me any more. A well-fed mutt with a granite heart and a hell of a reputation comes along with fifty thousand words that tell exactly nothing. What does the mutt get? A dollar a word, fifty thousand dollars, and a thank you kindly, sir, call again. Lopsided humanity in reverse.

Well, thought I to myself, my first letter to the Sunset Sanctum will be such and such and so and so. I mixed a lot of words with some punctuation marks according to formula and recipe. Did realization equal anticipa-tion? I should say not. One down and she rides as is or she doesn't ride at all because I'll be damned if I'll do it over. The second pretty much the same. What's the matter with words that they always figure something different from their intent? Two down and she rides as is. The third time is the charm, thought I, and this one will be done by mathematical rule and Calculus formula. If it's in them I'll make these damned words produce a result that is the one desired. Well, what was the answer? That's it, what was it? Three down and such a mess.

Not so good, but as long as I was in the mood and acquiring the habit of making big ones out of little ones, sentences out of words, I decided to try another one. This number four will be a stake colt. I'll let him run free and give him a nice hand-ride, easylike. What do you suppose hapeasylike. What do you suppose happened? The crazy fool ran away in the back stretch and jumped the fence. No use talking, the only way to beat this word game is by a lucky

That's four down, all one color and black, which with his one, a red deuce, makes five. A bobtail and anyone who can bluff a win on that is either good or lucky.

Take Lindbergh. There was a kid all smeared over with luck. Levelheaded and prepared, yes, but full-up with luck. He went and got himself a reputation, then he wrote a book and it sold, oh, by the millions, I guess. If he hadn't done gone and got himself a reputation how many books would he have sold?

There are all kinds of ways of getting publicity and acquiring a reputation. One way is startling stuff and a mystery. What I am now going to write has nothing of egotism but is quite and entirely mercenary and is predicated upon the assumption that there is a certain ability as yet

Assuming that what I am sending you is suitable to your purpose and

VOICES FROM THE WILDERNE

A LITERARY BOW

(I think I have made a discovery-a writer who never has written any-On my invitation this novice sent in four articles, accompanied by the following letter, which was not written for publication, but which, as the author's first attempt, is too good to keep. The articles will be published in subsequent Spectators.)

My Dear Beaton:

Certainly I should and do appreciate your generous encouragement to me to try my hand at writing and I am willing to admit that you are in a position and are capable of exercising fair judgment in the matter, but I am impelled to say that in my opinion you are, as a prophet, a rotten guesser, which reminds me something of the way you handed Will Hays a succession of swift, hot body blows, following them up with a nice, clean uppercut to the jaw, and then, after you had him good and groggy, walk-ing up to him and saying, "Now, Will, listen. There's nothing personal in that, nothing personal at all; let's be chummy and have a smile together." That was surely rich and it is a happy faculty to be able to do it that way.

I figured it that inasmuch as here is a man who is gracious enough to tell me I have the makings and generous enough to offer me space for a tryout I'll just roll him three pills from those makings and let him smoke them.

One difficulty was how to roll them. There was a time when blended goods was considered extra fine and much better than the straight goods out of which it was compounded. An article is more or less stiff and formal; a personal letter to some real or imaginary person has a tendency to slop over; a letter to an editor is either a knock or a boost, advice or a request. I judged that it might get by if I wrote you some blended stuff, a letter addressed to you personally that would be in effect an article but would, in addition, have a little touch of color and be somewhat eased off by a certain amount of personal and editorial address and reference. Plans are so easy; accomplishments so difficult.

Take one of those wheel-heads who in the exuberant hope of youth or the fatuous folly of age says to himself, "I'll write for a living, so I will; there, now, I'll show 'em'. He ponders and ponders and after a considerable time and the consumption of several cartons of cigarettes he says, "I shall write a cow". More pondering, more time, more cigarettes and then to be more exact and more specific he decides, "I shall write a Guernsey cow". More pondering, more time, the burning up of the bowl of a perfectly good pipe and the Guernsey cow is finished. With dreams and visions involving a tailor-made, ten courses and a lovely lady he takes his brain-child to a hardheaded buyer, who looks it over. "What's this?" says the hard-head. "Why, sir, why, that is a Guernsey cow." "Like hell it is," says hardhead, "that is an ox or maybe a beef steer." Then the poor, simple writer goes out and cadges one full-size, completely satisfying drunk to forget about it. It's a tough game.

A half-starved shrimp with a million dollar soul comes along with a deep and beautiful thought of lasting quality. What does he get? He tells it in twenty-five words and he gets a cent a word. Two-bits and don't

GIFTS FOR MEN, WOMEN, CHILDREN AND THE HOME



SHOP AT BALZER'S—"TWO SHOPS"—JUST WEST OF VINE

that I can deliver as often and as many times as is necessary, you furnish the mystery by keeping my personal identity secret and I furnish the startling stuff. Maybe yes for me, maybe no. Maybe can do, maybe no can do. The one very beautiful and particularly delightful point in such a deal is that it costs no one as much as a nickel and there is a chance for a

mysterious moron. Black, white? Male or The brown, yellow or white? female, young or old? Eccentric, temperamental, crazy or practical? Foolish or wise? Who the hell? Doggone. Hot stuff!

In due course there may come a bright and sunshiny day when some weary-minded editor, so saturated with wordy dope that he is only halfalive, will look out through his thick-lensed spectacles and say to his pur-chasing agent, "Henry, there is a guy out in California who is getting himself a hell of a reputation. Go nail him while he is hot."

And the dirty deed will be done. ALIAS JIMMY BRANT.

ABOUT BRITISH FILMS

Dear Sir:

The article on the above subject makes one wonder. Are all British films so hopelessly bad as Mr. Cedric Belfrage makes out? I had heard that Mons was a wonderfully good war film, and that Guns of Loos was at least quite passable.

Mr. Belfrage's critique reads rather

like an asperson both expressed and by innuendo on the private lives of the persons directing the films rather than a genuine criticism of the pictures themselves, and one feels inclined to ask "Who is Mr. Cedric Belfrage, anyway?" Has he a brief to belittle all directors of British films, or is he "a man who builds his fame on ruins of another's name"?

S. T. HANKEY.

HANDSOME TREATMENT

My dear Mr. Beaton:

Allow me to thank you for your splendid notice regarding my case with F. B. O. that you so generously contributed to the last number of the fearless Spectator.

Perhaps you will wish to mention in your next number that one day's money was sent me by F. B. O. after your paper was published. Possibly you will agree with me that this idea will show a fair and square spirit; much more of one, I may add, than has been shown to me by others.

Having registered my grouch in your valuable paper, perhaps, now that fairness is the subject in hand, it would be an agreeable change for me to cite the most wonderful and surprising matter that has come my way from a producer since I have ceased being a star. As follows: A couple of months ago I played a part in a Sterling Production, which as everyone knows is managed by the loved and genial Joe Rock. The picture was directed by the capable Phil

Rosen, and the whole engagement was a perfect dream of happy, friendly co-operation and accomplishment. I worked four days for Joe Rock, and at the finish of my labors (?) I was handed five days' pay! Upon asking an explanation of this weird occur-rence the kindly Joe, much embar-rassed at the good deed, and mentally digging his toe in the ground and whirling his hat, patted me on the back and said he liked my work, and felt that I was entitled to five days! I ask you if you have ever heard of such a thing? I am not over it yet never will be. You will be greatly cheered, I know, to have your faith in our producers partly restored by this more than gracious act. And I really feel that it deserves to be made FLORENCE E. TURNER.

ALL ABOUT THIEVES

Dear Welford Beaton:

Enclosed, please find check for five dollars for subscription to The Film Spectator, a magazine of such compelling interest that someone invariably steals it from my mail-box before I have time to read it. I still manage to keep in touch with your writings, however, by the simple expedient of stealing some other subscriber's copy.

Therefore, if you should receive tearful letters from Rupert Julian or Otto Matiesen, saying that some scurvy thief has stolen their copies of The Film Spectator, please don't tell them that the culprit is

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A Woman Writes Me—

to the effect that as she is a screen writer she is anxious to do everything she can to make The Spectator a more powerful champion of the writers' interests, but she can't quite see how she can contribute to this by sending The Spectator a check for fifty dollars for ten subscriptions to be sent to exhibitors.

"What good will it do me or the exhibitors?" she writes. "A number of my friends who admire your paper greatly have asked me the same question."

My campaign for a large exhibitor circulation is not designed to do the exhibitors any good, so we may dismiss that part of the question, even though hundreds of letters that I have received during the last two months bear writness to the pleasure exhibitors derive from reading The Spectator.

I want exhibitors derive from reading The Spectator.

I want exhibitor derivation for two reasons, One is that the revenue derived from it will help to offset the determined effort producers are making to put The Spectator out of business.

The other is that the more exhibitor readers The Spectator has the more influence it will have on the producers when it is fighting for fair play for serven workers. Exhibitors supply the market for the producers and all salesmen wish to retain the respect of those to whom they sell their wares.

Producers will grant reforms rather than let their customers know that the reforms are necessary. When The Spectator has the strength of thousands of exhibitors behind it, it will be a more powerful friend of screen workers than it can be without such backing.

Every time I receive a check for fifty dollars I enlist ten more people to stand back of me in my fight for decent screen conditions.

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Edited by WELFORD BEATON

THE 20 Cents FILM SPECTATOR

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Hollywood, California, January 7, 1928

No. 10

We offer directors a couple of gold medals

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A discussion of the use and abuse of close-ups

Is a love story always necessary in a picture?

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EVERY OTHER SATURDAY

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He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., JANUARY 7, 1928

A COUPLE OF MEDALS

CREEN art seems to be about at a standstill. Once in a long time we get a perfect picture like Seventh Heaven, but after it has been shown we can discover no evidence of its having had a beneficial effect on the art. The screen apparently profits nothing from either its faults or its virtues. Most of the pictures are love stories, which make the love scenes in them matters of greatest importance to them, yet how seldom we see on the screen a love scene that is not a duplicate of what we have seen in hundreds of other pictures. And how often do you see a final fade-out that looks as if any thought had been expended on it? To stimulate interest in these two important features of pictures, love scenes and fadeouts, I offer two gold medals, one to be presented to the director responsible for the best love scene shown on the screen during 1928, and the other to the director responsible for the most striking final fadeout during the same period. The only handicaps under which directors will work in striving for these recognitions of merit is that the love scenes and the fade-outs will have to please me personally, and I may have odd tastes. But I can not see how it can be avoided. I can not very well appoint a committee to tell me what love scene I admire most during the year. I must decide that for myself. Another handi-

THE NEXT SPECTATOR

A review of Grandma Bernle Learns Her Letters, a new Fox picture, directed by John Ford, a superb example of screen art, worthy of a place beside its great studiomate, Seventh Heaven.

Reviews of several other pictures, among them Chicago, The Noose Under the Black Eagle, Mademoiselle from Armentieres, Finders Keepers, High School Hero, Lady of Victories.

A discussion of economy in production.

The editor is offered a job, but before accepting it he would have to kill The Spectator.

Comments on topics of interest to picture people.

cap is that I must see the love scene, and I do not see all the pictures that are made. The only way to get around that is for directors to inform me when they have made love scenes and fade-outs that they desire me to consider. I am aware, too, that a love scene or a fade-out that I admire when I see it on the screen may have been written into the script exactly as it is shot, which would entitle the writer of the script to all the credit for its originality, but if I go beyond the director in an effort to discover to whom belongs the credit I am liable to start a lot of rows, and awarding the prizes would amount to settling disputes. I am not offering myself in the capacity of a referee, consequently I will award the medals to directors and allow them to fight it out with the script writers. My statement that I must select the prize winners myself does not mean that I will not value the assistance of readers of The Spectator in making the selections. I want such assistance. When you see a love scene or a final fade-out whose originality impresses you write me about it and tell me why you like it. If you do not, I may miss it. My only reason for offering the medals is my hope that they may lead to the improvement of pictures. I believe that at present too much attention is given to pictures as a whole and too little to their individual features. Love scenes are important, but, as I have said already, I can see no evidence of the expenditure of thought on them. They have become standardized, as have final fade-outs. I believe the responsibility for this rests with directors, therefore to them I offer:

The Film Spectator Gold Medal for the most original and most romantic love scene shown on the screen during 1928.

The Film Spectator Gold Medal for the most original and most appropriate final fade-out shown on the screen during 1928.

WHEN?

By GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN

There is one best way to present a thought,

Whether on paper or on the screen, That those who see or hear may be impressed By that thought's message, May grasp its full import and realize Its concrete substance. "Thoughts are things," not vapid whisperings. They come from whence? No man may know; But they have power to damn or bless, To gladden by some fragrance saved from long ago, Or wither, by their sere unfruitfulness. The one best way! O, genius, where art thou That pictured thoughts so fail to realize their end? Great scenes fall flat. A withered bough, Creaking in Autumn's wind, has more of drama, More of that which wakes response within the heart Than labored sequence, costly sets and all the panoplied

In the noble garm, commercialized, of Art.

Of unessential junk, that masquerades, and cloaks its

motley

This Year Marks Dawn of New Era

LL signs seem to point to nineteen-twenty-eight as a year that will stand out for all time in the history of the screen. I believe that in time to come history will credit it with marking the dawn of the Renaissance of the motion picture art. We have several definite things upon which to base the prediction. On the whole the art to-day is limited in its expression by the ignorance of those who dominate it and who have regarded it solely as something to milk for their own benefit. This year the strength of this domination will be broken. The investigation which the United States Department of Justice is conducting now both in the East and in Hollywood will reach the courts stage next June or July, and the whole industry will receive such a shaking that it will rid itself of the corruption that now retards its progress and it will set out with fresh vigor to achieve its artistic destiny. It is too healthy even now to be choked to death by those who have it in their grasp, but when the grasp is broken its progress will be amazingly rapid. The litigation that will give it a new birth will not be confiscatory and the same people still will control it, but when respectability is forced upon them and punishment meted out to them for their lack of it in the past, they will withdraw their blighting influence from production and confine their attention to the welfare of their major investment represented by hundreds of picture houses all over the country. When the United States Government forces producer-distributors to regard the restraint-of-trade law and makes the sale of pictures an open-market proposition, the houses owned by the screen barons will not continue to have their present advantage over competing houses and will have to shop for pictures as all the others must. At the present time the majority of the pictures made by the big producers are so lacking in merit that they could not be sold by any other method than the coercion applied by the block-booking practice. It is safe to assume that block-booking will cease when the Government acts, making it impossible for the big studios to find a market for the trash that they now turn out. Only good pictures, no matter by whom produced, will be in demand, and the big producing organizations will have to make good pictures or step aside and allow those to make them who can. They will step aside. They will have no zest for the producing game when it becomes respectable. They operate as thugs, not as gentlemen, and when the game becomes gentlemanly the rules will be so strange to them that they will withdraw from it. This ultimately will lead to the screen art becoming as all other arts, one which expresses itself in individual efforts. Unit production will thrive. All over Hollywood little groups will be making pictures with little money, and, like the products of all other arts, the majority of pictures will be failures, but there will be enough successful ones to keep the market supplied. The capital to support production will be forthcoming. Those with hundreds of millions of dollars invested in houses will work out plans to assure a steady flow of pictures to protect the investment. That is a mere detail. important thing is that those with picture brains will come to the front. No longer will they be hampered by ignorant supervisors who now make it almost impossible for a capable director to make a good picture. The pictures of the future will not be loaded with the tremendous overhead that now makes their cost so excessive, and exhibitors will be able to secure them at rentals that will be reasonable. Possibly the investigators of the Department of Justice who are so busy in Hollywood at the present moment do not know that the results of their work will improve the status of an art, but such is the case.

How to Classify Motion Pictures

DISCERNING correspondent writes to ask me why, in reviewing a picture, I do not designate the dramatic classification to which it belongs, whether it is a comedy, a drama, or a tragedy. To be quite frank about it, half the time I don't know. Screen entertainment has not taken to itself a definite form, and until it does it can not be subjected to the highly intellectual and understanding criticism that has assisted all the other arts to come as near as they have to perfection. Before attempting to give a picture a classification let us see if we know what classifications there are. We will start at the bottom. Burlesque presents in entertaining form something that is not believable. Farce is something that is believable only for a moment. Next we have true comedy of action or complication, in which the entertainment flows from the plot, the characters being almost static. The most abrupt step upward towards the highest form of drama is the comedy of manners, in which, for the first time in our rise, we encounter the entertainment flowing from the characters and not from the plot. Next we have comedy-drama, in which the comedy is relieved by dramatic moments. Melo-drama is the exact opposite. In it we have the dramatic moments relieved by comedy. Social drama may have comedy relief or may not. In it the characters dominate the plot. Ibsen's plays are perfect examples of this. Tragedy is the highest form of drama. It is allowed no latitude, and contains no comedy whatever-and in it plot is subordinated to the characters. Now, before we can place a motion picture definitely under one of the above classifications it must be true to such classification, and how many motion pictures are? In my opinion, only those directed by Ernst Lubitsch. The Marriage Circle and Lady Windemere's Fan are perfect examples of comedies of manners which are true to their classification. If he had been left alone with Old Heidelberg it would have been a perfect example of social drama. Lubitsch is our best director because he reveals a perfect understanding of the fundamentals of the drama, consequently it is not difficult to classify his offerings, as he adheres strictly to form. Let us take a picture of someone else, and do some supposing. Suppose in one of his comedies of manners Lubitsch has one of his characters fall into a bathtub. The scene makes a hit because Lubitsch, the master, puts it in exactly the right place and in the right way, and makes it a perfect part of a comedy of manners. Another producer is making a comedy-drama. He knows what a hit Lubitsch made with his bathtub. He steals the idea and in his comedy-drama he has a character fall into a tub. In other words, he puts a piece of a comedy of manners into a comedy-drama. And he does not stop here. He borrows an idea from Camille, Fred Niblo's fine social drama, and injects it into his comedy-drama. And so on. And I am asked to classify his picture! What is it, anyway? It ceased to be a true comedy-drama when he reached beyond that classification

for something to put into it. It is a poor picture because it is true to no form. The bathtub scene, so successful in the Lubitsch production, hurts the comedy-drama because it is an alien quantity in the latter. When we have all our pictures made by people who understand thoroughly what screen art is, I will be able to satisfy my correspondent by classifying them. That will not be until we have rid ourselves of the supervisors who now make it impossible for the art to advance. It is at a standstill because the producers who dominate it know nothing whatever about it and have selected as their lieutenants people who know no more.

Going Right Ahead After a Picture Ends

HE obsession that the love story is the major interest in every picture often is responsible for pictures being ruined, or nearly so. In His Dog we have an example of it in a little, intimate story. In The Enemy we have a big story with a powerful theme laboring under the same disadvantage. Lillian Gish stars in The Enemy under the direction of Fred Niblo. It is a war story which Niblo handles with a breadth of understanding and a convincing sweep that makes it rank as perhaps his greatest contribution to the screen. The picture is an indictment of war, the most powerful indictment that I yet have seen screened. In its early sequences it plants the happiness of the home in which Miss Gish lives with her grandfather, Frank Currier, a college professor. She is engaged to Ralph Forbes. John Peters and Fritzi Ridgeway, man and wife, are friends of Lillian, and Ralph Emerson, an Englishman, is a college chum of Forbes. The war breaks out and the picture deals with its effect on the fortunes of those in whom the first couple of reels make us interested. George Fawcett, father of Forbes, becomes a profiteer and lives on the fat of the land, while a baby born to the union of Forbes and Lillian is undernourished. Word comes that Peters has been killed, and his widow, rather than allow her child to starve, makes money to support it in the one sure way that always is open to attractive young women. To save the life of her baby Lillian follows the example of Fritzi. We see her take off her wedding ring and, dressed in her best, enter a cafe frequented by men looking for women. From a close-up of wine being poured into a glass there is a dissolve to milk being poured into a nursing bottle, followed by a medium shot showing Lillian giving her baby the bottle. It is a magnificent bit of direction to put over something that required delicate handling. The irony of Lillian's sacrifice is that immediately following it, George Fawcett, her father-in-law, relents of his neglect of her and provides relief that coming twenty-four hours earlier would have made the tragedy of her sacrifice unnecessary. But fate has not dealt all its blows. In quick succession come news of the death of Lillian's husband and the death of her baby. Lillian's reaction to these overwhelming tragedies is shown in the greatest scene she ever has contributed to the screen. All through the picture we almost can hear the rhythmic beat of marching feet as more men march to be sacrificed to the god of war, and in her big scene Lillian gives physical expression to her emotions to the same relentless rhythm. It is superb acting. The war ends, and we see George Fawcett, the profiteer, receiving a decoration for meritorious service as a citizen.

The story ends there. With magnificent strokes Niblo has drawn a picture of the insanity of war, and up to this point has given us a film that will attract the attention of the world, and which reflects the highest credit on those in the Metro organization who had anything to do with its making. But the picture goes on after the story ends. To impress its lesson on the viewer it kills Forbes, but for what Metro regards as the interest of the boxoffice, it brings him back to life in the last reel. The people who are equipped with mentalities that would make them appreciate the impressive manner in which Niblo has handled the main theme can feel only that the ending is ridiculous and totally illogical, while those whose mentalities are weak enough to demand the happy ending could not possibly enjoy the high degree of intelligence that the rest of the picture reflects. If this reasoning be sound it would appear that Metro did its best to provide against the picture being wholly satisfying to anyone. If Galli Curci sang an inspiring aria and followed it with a clog dance the whole performance would be no more ridiculous than the happy ending tacked on to it makes The Enemy.

Niblo Does Some Great Directing

AKING motion pictures is a business that, like all other businesses, has as its main object the earning of profits. It earns its money by selling works of art. It would seem that the more merit there is in the works of art the greater money they should earn. I don't see how anyone can quarrel with that on the ground that it is not economically sound reasoning. The lowbrows who control pictures laugh at you when you mention screen art. They tell you it is purely a business to get money, and then they proceed to spend money unnecessarily to put handicaps on the earning power of their products. It is word-of-mouth advertising that creates the profits. Highbrows will condemn The Enemy for its lowbrow ending and lowbrows will condemn it for its highbrow beginning, so where is the picture to get its word-of-mouth advertising? But even with the manhandling that ignorant supervision gave it, The Enemy is a picture that you must see. There are many shots in it which indicate that Niblo is a student of foreign technic, and its freedom from close-ups would indicate that he is a reader of The Spectator, which, incidentally, he has been since its first number. He opens the picture with a succession of dissolves which effectively plant its atmosphere, and then with incident and symbolism he tells his story rapidly but clearly. Newspaper headings superimposed on the whirring wheels of a multiple press tell graphically the sweep of the world war, and marching columns under different flags give pictorial expression to what the newspapers imply. Some of his intimate scenes are beautiful and touching, splendid examples of intelligent direction. The wedding of Miss Gish and Forbes is one of the high spots of the picture. It is a superb bit of simplicity in a majestic setting. A splendid touch is Forbes' attempt, as he walks down the aisle of the cathedral, to keep in step with the martial music that bands are playing for marching soldiers on the . streets outside. The film is full of such masterly touches, there being more of them than I have seen in any other picture that Niblo has made. Most effectively, and in many ways, he introduces the personal equasion into the

world conflict. I could find only two shots to quarrel with. In both of them George Fawcett, a wealthy Viennese and father of Ralph Forbes, who is planted as a gentleman, retains his hat on his head after entering a private home. This business robs the scenes of all their conviction, for all Europeans of the better class observe the conventions strictly. After seeing Miss Gish's performance in this picture I wonder why Metro let her go, but when I consider the blundering incapacity reflected in the ending, I can understand why she was willing to go. Her acting throughout is more vibrant than any she has displayed under Griffith's direction. D. W. seemed always to make her play on one chord, while Niblo allows her to run the whole scale. The mannerisms, of which I confess I was growing a little tired, have no place in The Enemy, and she is above criticism in every foot of film that shows her. Ralph Forbes is an ideal leading man for her. His performance is sincere and intelligent. I never saw Frank Currier do better. He and George Fawcett are an ideal pair of old men, and their contributions to the picture are great. Polly Moran and Fritzi Ridgeway add their bit to the wealth of good acting. John Peters is capital in a small part. Someday he will have his chance and when it comes he will do it credit. Metro has given the picture a magnificent production and it will rate as one of the big pictures of the new year. Although it is a war picture it shows no actual war scenes. It is a story of the home, not of the trenches, a stark tragedy that shows the crime of warfare, a human document of engrossing interest. It contains titles that are written splendidly and which contain propaganda consistent with the theme. It is too bad that Metro displayed its lack of learning in the manner of their punctuation. If as much attention had been paid to the use of English as was paid to the uniforms of the soldiers The Enemy would have still greater appeal to people of education.

Scene Spoiled by Movie Habits

NE score in the indictment of motion pictures is that they're all alike. They create that impression in spite of the fact that the stories are different. Being different in story incident, it follows that the similarity must be the result of the factory method applied to production. We have less than a dozen directors who show originality, and from them we get the refreshingly good pictures, but all the rest work along the same lines, and never let us forget that it is a movie that we are looking at. When an action becomes a habit we perform it without thought. Pictures have habits to which they adhere in the same way. The close-up habit is one of the worst. No thought is expended on the use of such shots-and we never will have uniformally good pictures until thought is expended on every shot. Motion pictures are given an air of unreality because so many things are done in them as they are done in motion pictures and unlike the way they are done in real life. A good example of what I mean is the treatment of a scene in The Legion of the Condemned, which William A. Wellman recently completed for Paramount. First I will sketch the incidents leading up to it. At an embassy ball in Washington Gary Cooper becomes engaged to Fay Wray, and a little later finds her it the lap of a drunken chap, whose general behavior, and that

friends who take off their coats and lap up wine, would indicate that it is an odd sort of an embassy that is giving the ball. Gary is much put out at the discovery of the necking proclivities of his fiancee and to seek surcease from his sorrow joins the Legion of the Condemned in France, a body of rash young men who court death zealously, that feature of the picture being directed admirably by Wellman and acted splendidly by Barry Norton, Voya Georges, Francis McDonald, and a couple of others whose names I do not know. One of the most hazardous exploits the young fellows are called upon to perform is the landing of spies within the enemy lines, where both pilots and passengers are executed promptly if caught. Barry Norton goes out that way in the most brilliant bit of acting in the picture, a beautiful piece of work that stamps the youngster as a real artist. Cooper is called upon to make a similar flight. His passenger turns out to be Fay Wray, their mutual discovery of one another being dramatic. It could have been a great scene, but it is ruined completely by the movie treatment given it. In the presence of his superior officers, comrades and mechanics, Gary asks Fay why she was drunk that night in Washington and she tells him she was doing secret service work. They kiss and make up, kissing in assorted shots. Then they fly away on their dangerous mission. To have preserved the mood of the picture by maintaining its military atmosphere, the two should have bowed to one another and taken their places in the plane. The drama of their flight into enemy territory should have been built up, and the audience should have been kept in suspense over the outcome of their dramatic meeting. When enemy territory was reached Cooper should have discharged his passenger and prepared to return, and then the explanation and the reconciliation should have been shown. The two then were alone, their last chance had come, and their situation was exceedingly dangerous, a complete setting for a dramatic and tender love scene. It would have been a treatment free from all movie flavor. But Wellman treats it as they do in motion pictures and it is not convincing. Close-ups also contribute to the artificiality of the production. I never saw a picture in which long shots were treated so intelligently and close-ups so stupidly. The height of absurdity is reached in one huge close-up showing only the chins, mouths and noses of the sweethearts when they kiss. It is both vulgar and ludicrous, and only can have the effect of doing what every scene should avoid-diverting the attention of the audience from the story.

Lot of Little Things Harm the Production

THE Legion of the Condemned is going to be a popular picture. None of my growing number of exhibitor readers need hesitate about booking it if they can buy it reasonably, the things I criticize in it being of more importance to those who make pictures than to those who pay to see them. I was impressed with a great deal of the production, and if I had been seeking only entertainment I would have felt repaid for the time spent in viewing it. There are many beautiful shots in it, and Wellman's direction generally is free from most of the weaknesses that I complain of most often. The only bit of real acting is Norton's scene, referred to in the previous paragraph, but none of it is below the ordinary program picture

standard. Both Miss Wray and Cooper have parts beyond their present ability to handle adequately, but they are acceptable. The scenes in German territory are handled splendidly. The Germans are presented as human beings, even when they condemn Fay to be executed. They show that they find the duty a sad one, and they register real pity for her. In these sequences there is a striking characterization of a heavy given by John Peters. He shows that he has a heart even when he insists upon the observance of the heartless military laws. When his command turns tail under the merciless hail of enemy fire, we see Peters, undaunted, a heroic little figure, frantically trying to force his soldiers to turn and fight. There are just a few feet of it, but it is good acting and good direction. When Fay is about to be executed there is more good direction, Wellman injecting much feeling into the sequence. The titles are another worthy feature of the production. But the good little things in the picture are outnumbered by the bad little things. One scene is labelled "Monte Carlo" and shows a roulette table that bears no resemblance whatever to the kind of such tables used in the famous casino. One side of the table is shown, with one croupier seated at it. In Monte Carlo three croupiers sit at each side of the table and one at each end. But it is not the table that makes the scene wrong; it is the fact that its locale is designated as Monte Carlo. If the label had been "A Resort" there would be nothing to complain of. A title tells us that Gary Cooper is to take off at three o'clock in the morning. When he takes off the shadows cast by his plane indicate that the sun is high in the heaven, an extraordinary stunt for the sun to perform so early in the morning. Another false note is struck when Cooper comes down in enemy territory to bring back Fay Wray. The Germans are aware of his plan to come—just how they learned it not being shown-and tether Fay to a post as a decoy to attract him. When he lands beside her and is captured he snarls at her and charges her with betraying him. It is an idiotic scene. He is supposed to love the girl, yet he does not trust her. You can not have perfect love without perfect trust. Another typical bit of movie stuff is shown when Cooper is given one minute in which to bid his sweetheart good-bye before she is executed. Instead of bounding forward to crowd as much farewell as possible into the minute, he accommodatingly poses in front of the camera for nearly half the minute before moving forward like a movie actor. Reverting to the premise established in the first few lines of the previous paragraph, it would seem that The Legion of the Condemned is one of those pictures that lose a lot of their entertainment value by virtue of being treated exactly like a motion picture. We will have such pictures as long as the factories continue to operate. I have pointed out nothing of major importance, but combined they are responsible for robbing the picture of that air of sincerity that a picture must have before it can be rated as a satisfactory example of screen art.

Melville Brown Has a Good One

ELVILLE Brown has made a good audience picture of Thirteen Washington Square. It is notable for three capital performances by such veterans as Zasu Pitts, Alice Joyce and Jean Hersholt, and a couple of quite satisfying ones by George Lewis, who is doing

better all the time, and Helen Foster, a wholesome girl with a pleasing personality. Helen Jerome Eddy has a small part, which she makes stand out. The main title announces that Carl Laemmle presents Jean Hersholt and Alice Joyce, but as the film unwinds Zasu Pitts looms larger and larger until she steals the picture. She gives a splendid performance in a comedy part which Brown had the good sense to direct in a way that made it plausible and not so ridiculous as Zasu so often is made to make her roles. I don't think it is possible for Hersholt to give a poor performance. In this picture his characterization is similar to the one he gave in Alias the Deacon, a crook of seeming piety. It is a delight to watch him on the screen. In Thirteen Washington Square his acting is full of subtleties, every one of which the large preview audience reacted to. Zasu's part, however, is richer in comedy, which she plays with such consummate skill that it stands out as the most prominent. Miss Joyce has a role that fits her admirably, that of an aristocratic snob, unsympathetic until the final sequence. The story is intriguing, and Harry Hoyt wrote an excellent adaptation of the original. Alice Joyce's house is closed as she is about to take a trip to Europe, but in a logical manner all the characters are brought back to it late at night, and the ensuing sequences reflect Brown's direction at its best. There is something spooky about a house with ghost-like coverings on the furniture, and people roaming about it without being aware of one another's presence. Brown brings out the spookiness effectively. All the scenes are lighted dimly, giving the characters an eerie appearance as they move about. It is in these scenes that Zasu earns most of her laughs, although Hersholt dominates them by his masterly acting. The complications are presented in a way that commands the wrapt attention of the audience. In essence it is a mystery picture, told as all mystery stories should be told on the screen: the audience being aware at all times of what is going on, but the characters being bewildered. The chief weakness of the picture is the impression it gives by the titles and editing that it was pawed over a lot before it was put in shape for release. Some of the titles obviously were written to bridge gaps made by the elimination of scenes or sequences. You often see such a thing, and will continue to until pictures are made sensibly. I do not know if it was a fault of the script, direction, editing or titling, but Hersholt's reformation towards the end of the picture is much too abrupt. It is not planted properly, and no effort was made to lead up to it logically. Brown's grouping at times is stiff and unnatural. Near the end of the film he has his characters line up like a rank of soldiers, all with their faces towards

JOSEPH JACKSON

has written one picture and titled seven in eleven weeks at Warner Brothers.

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the camera. When you view a Universal picture you must be prepared for the utmost ignorance being displayed in the punctuation of the titles. Those in this picture are about the last word in absolute stupidity. Every possible crime is committed. A question has no interrogation mark after it. The screen has a language of its own, it is argued. Illiterate people also have a language of their own. Apparently Universal has borrowed it.

"Her Wild Oat" Is One of Colleen's Best

OLLEEN MOORE never was more delightful than she is in Her Wild Oat. And Mickey Neilan never was more happy with his direction. Mickey has something that no other director possesses. His pictures used to give the impression that he had ordered all screen conventions to go to the devil, and he would put into them such whimsicalities and oddly humorous fancies as his moods dictated. He takes himself more seriously in Her Wild Oat, but it is a funny picture and contains many clever directorial touches, although it has its faults. In the early sequences, which are directed very well, Colleen is shown as the proprietor of a lunch wagon. She looks neat in her gingham dress, and is a sensible and serious little business woman with a lively sense of humor. She uses some of her savings in a splurge at a fashionable summer resort, and as soon as she arrives there she becomes a hopeless little fool with an awful taste in clothes and a walk that is the height of absurdity. The two phases of her characterization are inconsistent. The taste a girl displays in wearing gingham would be in evidence in the way she wears silk. Even though it is a comedy Colleen's exploits at the resort will appeal to the audience only to the extent that she has its sympathy. As soon as she is shown as a brainless creature some of the sympathy is forfeited. I do not see that anything is gained by drawing a character with such bold strokes. It may produce laughs, but it would be interesting to know how many people laugh and how many don't. Let me point out one more bit of poor direction before getting back to my opening declaration that Her Wild Oat is a good picture. Larry Kent, the male lead, is impressed as a dishwasher on Colleen's wagon. Although the dishes are piled beside the pan in which they are to be washed. Kent stacks them in his arms instead of placing each in the pan as he picks it up. The instant he starts his stacking you are aware that he is doing the unnatural thing because he is going to drop the dishes, which he does. Simply by placing the pan a long way from the pile of dishes the scene could have been made plausible. I was alone in a projection room when I saw the picture, but I predict that wherever it is shown in a theatre its unfoldment will be accompanied by constant laughter. It is a trite story that has been done a thousand times, but it is acted so well by Colleen and directed so well by Mickey, and has been given such a colorful production by John McCormick that it is going to be rated as one of the best in which Colleen has appeared. Thanks to Al Hall's intelligent editing we have been spared the flock of close-ups which have marred some of Colleen's pictures. Her acting in this one is the best she has done. There are many delicious bits, one of them starting the picture off. It plants the vacation idea. We see a man fishing, another sailing a boat, a third playing polo and a fourth lolling on a beach. They are shown in medium shots. The camera backs up into a long shot and we discover that all four men are in a gymnasium for the purpose of cultivating a tan by artificial means. Quite clever. Three people are credited with the titles. One of them is responsible for this: "—where night life is so free that Scotchmen are suspicious." Considering the short time a title is on the screen, how many people in an audience will get the point in that one? What is the point, anyway? (As I read the proof of this review I discovered that I had overlooked Hallam Cooley. He gives a most excellent performance. In my opinion he is one of the cleverest comedians on the screen.)

"The Girl From Rio" Has Its Good Points

70U'RE missing something if you look only for pictures from the big studios when you go shopping for screen entertainment. Occasionally I go snooping about on a take-a-chance adventure and stumble on to a picture much better than any of the big ones that I have selected for review in the same week. That was the way I discovered Wild Geese, which I placed on my list of the ten best pictures of the year. I found another one the other night that had a lot of merit in it: The Girl From Rio. It is a Gotham picture, and Sam Sax and Sam Bischoff are listed among those getting screen credit for something or other. Tom Terriss adapted the story from something or other and directed it. I was startled when I saw the opening sequence in color and saddened when it ended so soon, making the black and white look flat and uninteresting. The feature of The Girl From Rio that appealed to me most was the really excellent performance by Carmel Myers. When I think of her and such girls as Bessie Love and Blanche Sweet appearing princi-

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pally in little pictures, and some girls I could mention being starred by the big fellows, I wonder again at the folly of the producers. For certain roles Carmel Myers has no equal on the screen. She can make a vamp part more respectable than any other girl. In this picture the inference is created that she is not all that she might be, but through her flirtations there shines a quality of right- eousness that makes it quite logical that she should become a nice girl in the end and go to England as the bride of Walter Pidgeon, who plays most acceptably the role of leading man. The trouble with most of our screen vamps is that they are so vampish that they can not play roles that ultimately become sympathetic. Carmel does not suffer from that handicap. In The Girl From Rio she is beautiful, alluring, roguish, sweet and refined, and convincing in each phase of her characterization. Richard Tucker gives a splendid performance also. He is a heavy who in the end becomes a rather decent chap, as more heavies should. Until I saw this picture I was unacquainted with the work of Terriss as a director, but it satisfies me that he has a good grasp of the fundamentals of his business. He is particularly effective in his grouping and in the composition of his scenes. He gives us some exquisite pictures, the credit for which must be shared with his cameraman. The story is told with a directness and despatch which keeps the viewer's attention from lagging. Some of the fade-outs and fade-ins seemed to be quite short, making the cutting abrupt, but that is a fault that amounts almost to a virtue when all you're looking for is the story. Terriss's direction is practically flawless except in respect to close-ups. One scene opens with a long shot of an attractively furnished room, in which Miss Myers and Pidgeon are small figures in the background. He has come to tell her that he will not see her again, despite the fact that they love one another. It was a chance for some fine direction by showing the entire sequence in a sustained long shot. But it is cut up into a fast flickering succession of close-ups, which I contend is direction entirely devoid of imagination. Again in the closing sequence we have scenes greatly weakened by close-ups. Tucker repents and decides to make Carmel and Pidgeon happy. The characters are so scattered that they can be shown only in close-up. The whole sequence should have been a medium shot with the three characters showing for its duration. The spirit of the sequence called for such treatment. Close-ups have become products of habit, not of intelligent consideration.

Should Figure Out Better Way to Do It

A S I have Marion Davies for breakfast almost every morning in the writings of Louella Parsons in the Examiner, it is too much to ask me to see her in pictures. The utterly ridiculous publicity which she receives in the Hearst papers arouses in me a feeling of antagonism, for I refuse to accept as a favorite one who is squirted into my eye along with grapefruit juice every morning. I have avoided her pictures of late, for I never saw her in anything I liked, and I don't view pictures that I anticipate having to criticize unfavorably. But I took a chance on The Fair Co-Ed when it was drifting around the neighborhood houses recently, and rather enjoyed it. Donald tells me that it is very bad because it shows college

life as it isn't, but I derived amusement from viewing this life as the picture shows it, and not deeming the production sufficiently important to criticize it for not being an authority on the subject it deals with. I can imagine a young person, however, not being so generous with a picture filled with young persons. The older I get the more I enjoy young people, and I have enjoyed the atmosphere of all the college pictures I have seen, even though I have found many things in them to criticize. I can not understand, for instance, why so much footage is given to football games which on the screen generally are a scramble of waving legs which mean nothing to me. In The Fair Co-ed we are treated to a confusing basketball game, and although I watched it intently I could not tell which side was winning, consequently it failed of its purpose of interesting me. All I could see was a lot of girls chasing one another frantically, and when the ball was popped into a basket I had to wait until the scoreboard was inserted before I knew which side had scored. As I watched this game the thought came to me that there is a good chance for someone to make such games interesting on the screen by inventing a system whereby we could get a comprehensive grasp of their progress as we get of a world series ball game when it is shown on the kind of boards the newspapers use when they bulletin the various plays. I have no concrete suggestion to make, but there surely is some way of presenting a football game on the screen in a manner that will arouse our excitement by keeping before us the point of major interest, the progress of the ball, and not the fate of particular individuals. Getting back to The Fair Co-ed: I think Sam Wood should have made the feud between Marion and Jane Winton a trifle more plausible. No reason for their mutual animosity was developed. Another fault I have to find is that the heroic qualities of the heroine were not maintained. The essence of college life is loyalty to the college. In this picture we

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Demmy Lamson, Manager Ruth Collier and W. O. Christensen, Associates have Marion refusing to play on her team because she was peeved over something so trivial that I've forgotten what it was. I suppose college pictures are made primarily for those interested in college life, and no one with knowledge of it will excuse a student for throwing down her college when a big game is to be played. Of course, Marion plays, but it is poor picture stuff to endeavor to create sympathy for a star by having her do something that it would have been unpardonable for her not to do. Another false note in this picture was the action of some of the boys on the sidelines shouting insults at Marion. If the insults were necessary they should have been hurled by girls, allowing the boys to remain as gallant as we like to think our college boys are.

Is a Love Story Always Necessary?

ART of the fuzz that the screen will shed as it grows up is the odd notion that every picture must contain a love story. As a text for a discourse on this subject let us take His Dog which Karl Brown directed for De Mille. It is a delightful film, the only true dog picture I ever saw on the screen. Joe Schildkraut, a down-andouter, finds an injured dog beside the roadside. He takes it home and nurses it back to health. It is a magnificent animal, a collie with all the noble qualities of the breed. The majesty of the dog's character finally effects Joe's reform. Interest in the dog is built up until he is put on the bench, winning the prize for the best of any breed in the show. The man who lost him recognizes him and takes him away from Joe. Later he returns to Joe's home, and Joe is in the act of returning him to his owner, Craufurd Kent, when he encounters Kent, who realizes that the dog would be happier with Joe and relinquishes all claim to him. Concurrent with the action involving the fate of the dog there is a minor interest in a love story developing between Schildkraut and Julia Faye. But the dog at all times dominates the picture, which was made for dog lovers. When the dog is restored to Joe all interest in the story ceases. If the picture accomplishes its purpose of keeping the audience in sympathy with the fate of the dog, the love story could not have created enough interest to justify it being carried beyond the point when the fate of the dog is settled. The dog being the major interest, the picture should have ended when there was no further reason for being concerned about it. But the picture does not end there. It goes on for another reel or so to bring together the loose ends of a love story in which the dog plays an incidental part, and in which the audience has no interest whatever. The minor interest of the first six reels becomes the major interest of the seventh, which is contrary to the tenets of screen art, or would be if it had any tenets. I sat through the final reel, for I was a guest in a projection room and was afraid the operator would tell Bill Sistrom if I walked out, but I was bored and felt that I would be disloyal to the fine dog who so greatly had commanded my sympathy if I transferred that sympathy to two humans who had done nothing to earn it. Of course, the final reel was tacked on as a sop to the convention that demands a love story in every picture. It is a wrong theory, and in this instance was responsible for the picture being much too long. Too many pictures are weakened by being thin from too much stretching to reach seven reels. His Dog

would have been a glorious little picture if it had not been a foot over five reels. Karl Brown, who astonished us with Stark Love, directed it, and I have not heard that he is to direct another for De Mille. Probably His Dog is not doing well enough to make the studio feel justified in giving him another chance. I have nothing upon which to base an opinion except what I saw on the screen, but I would hazzard a guess that Brown was no more to blame for the picture's lack of box-office appeal than I was. I imagine the script commanded him to keep on going for more than a reel after he had finished the picture. If he had been permitted to compress it within five reels I feel sure that he would have given us a cinematic gem. At that, though, I do not like his handling of the dog show sequence, nor the scenes which follow it showing Bob Edeson, as president of the Kennel club, demanding the restoration of the dog to his owner. Dog lovers do not treat one another as they do in this picture. Schildkraut, who gives a splendid performance throughout, is treated after the show as if he were a criminal. It strikes a false note. But no exhibitor need hesitate about showing His Dog. It is infinitely better than the vast majority of pictures.

No Excuse for Most Close-ups

HEN D. W. Griffith invented the close-up he put a blight on screen art. It is the greatest single handicap which the art carries. It encourages inefficient directing and promotes faulty editing. No intelligence whatever is applied to its use. Not more than once in a hundred times is a close-up used in a place where it should be. I was in a projection room the other day with one of the best known film editors in Hollywood and criticized his use of a close-up in a certain scene. "But

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I had to use one there," he protested, "to cover a lapse in the action." "What would you have done," I asked him, "if there were no such thing as a close-up?" That stumped him. He agreed with me that there was no excuse for the close-up as such, but claimed that as the scene was shot he had to use it. That places the blame on the director. If he had been efficient he would not have shot the scene in a manner that later made it necessary to use a close-up to patch it. That is all that most closeups are, simply patches to cover the holes directors leave in their work. If they understood their profession there would be no spots that need patching. Many scenes are ruined by being treated in close-ups. In His Dog, a De Mille production, Joseph Schildkraut is called before the president of a kennel club to explain where he got his dog. The idea of the scene is to show him as a pathetic figure in the presence of a number of people, all of whom are unfriendly to him. For the scene to preserve all its value Joe should have been shown for its entire length as the least important person in the room. But he is shown in several huge close-ups. They make him dominate a scene that should have dominated him. It is a perfect example of the spirit of a scene being ruined by adherence to the close-up habit. When a man is alone in a scene there can be no objection to showing him in a close-up, providing the set has been planted and none of the pictorial value of the scene is lost, but when two or more characters are, say, quarreling, some of the value of the scene is lost when they are shown as detached individuals. When we make pictures properly we never will have a close-up of a character speaking. At present we have them, which is wrong in theory, but they are made necessary because so few directors understand how to group their characters. They scatter them all over the screen instead of drawing them together in a natural pose that can be treated in a medium shot. In the last three reels of a seven-reel picture there scarcely ever is an excuse for even one close-up except when a new and important character is shown for the first time in one of these closing reels. By the time the first four reels are projected the audience is acquainted thoroughly with what each of the leading characters has to show in the way of facial expression, and in the last three reels medium shots can be used exclusively. My personal opinion is that even in a long shot we can get all the expression we need to get. My favorite seat in any picture house is in the last row, and from it I have studied hundreds of long shots and noted how clearly the expression on the face of some unimportant person in a mob stands out. It is surprising to me that the vast majority of our directors are doing nothing whatever to advance the art of picture making. All they bring to their work is stupid imitation of things that have been done a thousand times. They make closeups without having the remotest idea why they make them, and film editors are equally stupid in using them. We would have better pictures if directors would start shooting with the determination to eliminate close-ups.

TOM REED
Titles

A few would be found to be necessary, but such a determination would do away with the vast majority of them. But it would take more brains to shoot scenes without them, which is why we have them.

"Garden of Eden" Is One of Corinne's Best

EWIS Milestone's keen sense of humor that is so much in evidence in Two Arabian Knights, enriches The Garden of Eden, which, after so much travail, finally has emerged from the United Artists lot. It will rate as one of the best pictures in which Corinne Griffith ever has appeared, although it by no means is a perfect one. It was made under the supervision of John W. Considine, Jr., who invests his productions with sumptuous and artistic settings. Pictorially The Garden of Eden is a delight, but the excellent acting that it contains is its chief claim to distinction. Hans Kraly has written for it one of those scintillating comedies with a European background of which he is master. Monte Carlo is designated as the locale of most of the action. Making the location definite entailed on the producers the obligation to present Monte Carlo as it is, and the picture does not do that. There are no gardens in Monte Carlo even faintly resembling those shown, and no hotel in any way similar

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to that designated as the Garden of Eden. One miniature shot shows a building ten stories high. There is no building in Monte Carlo more than four stories in height. Even the flagpoles on the Casino do not reach that high in the air. In themselves these anachronisms are small affairs, but why designate a locale as a definite place and not make it like that place? It would have been a very simple matter to have left the location of the hotel unnamed. This would have removed all cause for criticizing the production. The only fault of Milestone's direction is his habit of cutting off the legs of his characters. In scores of shots to which the expressions of the characters could contribute nothing he cuts out half their bodies and all of the pictorial values of the settings to show us semiclose-ups for which there is no excuse. I can not understand how people who are supposed to know how to make pictures can sit in projection rooms and approve an endless parade of such stupidities. Even if ever there were an excuse for it on the ground that it was tolerated, are producers ever going to get away from it and strike a new note in screen art? Has it become a static art already, or is it that we have in our studios only people who can not think beyond things that have been done? The points that I have mentioned are of more importance in Hollywood than they will be in Hoboken. The Garden of Eden is a good audience picture—a very good one. It is packed full of delicious comedy that should make it popular throughout the world. Its story is connected and interesting up to the last sequence which shows Corinne undressing to her step-ins and descending a stairway to a crowded hotel lobby. It is utterly absurd and a cheap pandering to dirty-minded people who gloat over an undressed woman. In her future pictures Corinne should not heed the advice of those who argue that such exhibitions are good box-office stuff. When any girl can duplicate with these scenes the success that Mary Pickford has achieved without them, it will be time enough to consider them economically wise. Corinne never was more delightful in any picture than she is in this one. In every phase of her characterization she is capital, and although she is surrounded by a splendid cast she allows no one to take the picture from her. That sterling artist, Louise Dresser, gives another of her outstanding performances, and Charlie Ray, Edward Martindel and Lowell Sherman contribute to the wealth of good acting. Maude George also does well in a minor part. On the sidewalk after the

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performance Johnnie Considine asked me what I thought of the punctuation of the titles. I told him it was rotten.

Julian Makes Good With "Leopard Woman"

HE De Mille organization continues to turn out good audience pictures. Rupert Julian follows his Country Doctor with the human appeal that made it popular, with The Leopard Woman, as far removed as possible in theme from the former, but fully as rich in those qualities that audiences like. The Leopard Woman has two notable features: Julian's fine direction and Alan Hale's splendid performance. It is not a big picture, but Julian has invested it with a colorful atmosphere and has told his story in a gripping manner. It frankly is a picture that was made to stir you up. It contains two murders, really delightful features, for we do not have half as many murders on the screen as we should have. I mean this. Bloodand-thunder stuff is provided for us so seldom that when we do get a dose of it, provided it be well done, it is a most welcome change of diet. I don't think we have changed a great deal since the time melodramas flourished and murder was regarded as high class entertainment. Julian proves himself a splendid murderer. We do not see who commits the dastardly deeds, but we see the victims stagger into the scenes and collapse in front of the camera. In the end, of course, the mystery is cleared. But for all its murders and its mystery, The Leopard Woman is not lurid. Throughout it is highly artistic. Its scenes are confined to the lot of a strolling carnival company, and Julian has managed to bring out all the color that such a locale makes possible. He has developed

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his atmosphere splendidly, and maintains it effectively. The fact that there are but few individual close-ups in the picture is a feature that appeals to me. In fact, I can recall no other picture except Sunrise, in which close-ups are treated with as much intelligence. Julian never divides two characters in a scene to show each in a separate close-up. When two people are conversing and a close-up is desirable, he brings both of them into the shot which is half way between a close-up and a medium shot. Only when two characters are at a distance from each other and are facing each other does he show either of them in an individual closeup which, I maintain, is the proper way to treat close-ups. When two men come to the opposite ends of a room and stare at one another it is permissible to show each of them in a large close-up, for it obviously is impossible to register their expressions in a shot long enough to include them when they are so far apart; but when they draw together in the middle of the room and indulge in conversation there is no excuse whatever for giving each an individual close-up. In his direction Julian shows that he agrees with this view. The Leopard Woman adds to my growing conviction that Alan Hale is one of the very best actors we have. In this picture he is a gay villain-it's a mystery picture and I can't tell you too much about it-and is quite the most engaging villain I've seen for a long time. Hale brings real intelligence to play in the way he handles a role. His acting in this latest Julian picture marks a departure in the enactment of heavy roles. At no moment is he inspired by a worthy motive, but never for an instance is he anything but a cheerful, grinning, lovable rogue. He loses out in the end, of course, but he goes down cheer-

fully, the winning smile still on his face. He gives a really magnificent performance. Jacqueline Logan plays the name role. She is fearless among her leopards and makes a fine figure of a circus performer, but with such strong competition as Hale provides it is hard for her to register strongly with her acting. Robert Armstrong plays opposite her, a small part, but he does it well. No exhibitor need hesitate about buying The Leopard Woman.

Eating Is Poor Screen Material

AMES Bradbury is a detective in The Leopard Woman. The script called for him to eat peanuts in his scenes, I suppose in an effort to give him personality. That is all right in theory, but let us see how it works out. I suppose on the set Jim ate peanuts only when he was before the camera, consequently none of those on the set with him received the impression that he was eating many, for most of the time he was eating none. But what about the picture? Every moment he is on the screen he is eating the gubers. There is not one moment when his jaws are not working. We have a right to assume, therefore, that Bradbury, the detective, not the motion picture actor, ate peanuts all the time, that from morning to night they were his constant diet, for it is not reasonable to presume that he ate them only when working on the case we are interested in, and at no other time. But during all his waking hours he could not maintain the rate of consumption he establishes during the short time we see him. We know he must have his off moments, even though the picture seems to strive to prove that his faithfulness to his

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Uncle Tom's Cabin Cat and Canary Ben-Hur

extraordinary diet is perpetual. Such were the thoughts that I toyed with as I watched him eat his peanuts, and I could not give full consideration to the dramatic values of the scenes in which he appeared. I reflected that if he set his pace as soon as he arose in the morning he would have a bellyache long before noon, which distracted me and made me feel uncomfortable. Every time I watched his face to note his reaction to what was going on I saw him stuffing peanuts into it and that so fascinated me that I paid no attention to his expression. As a consequence Bradbury's performance meant nothing to me. In the same picture Alan Hale juggles golf balls as a diversion while his mind is engaged with something else. We can watch his face while we are conscious of the juggling, but are not distracted by it. In the last Spectator I made a brief comment on these extraneous methods of registering personality, and argued that it is not good business to have a character display any eccentricity that diverted attention from his facial expression, citing Doug Fairbanks' ever-present cigarette in The Gaucho as a sample of the mistakes that should be avoided. The peanuts in The Leopard Woman give me more confidence in my argument, and the juggling of the golf balls is something that I can point to to support it. Of course, I think that characters should smoke in screen scenes, but the smoking should be at intervals and not persistent enough to attract attention to itself. The screen is weak in characterization. In a ten-minute walk along Hollywood Boulevard you encounter more interesting personalities than you see on the screen in a month, but none of them is made interesting by virtue of the fact that he always has a cigarette between his lips or that he always is eating peanuts. He interests us because there is something about him that makes a greater appeal to our intellects than cigarettes or peanuts could. There are plenty of ways for screen people to be made more interesting than they are, and greater thought should be exercised in discovering the ways. Eating, in any setting, is something that should be resorted to only in extreme cases when nothing else will do. Did you ever stop to think that eating is the most unlovely thing we do? If we led perfect existences no two people would eat together. Our meals would be as private as our baths, and it would embarrass us as much to be caught at one as at the other. I will admit that my aversion for eating on the screen has been augmented of late by the exhibitions that Raoul Walsh has given us, but even before that I was of the opinion that it was far from being attractive even when it was made as attractive as possible.

WHEN Fox changed the name of Pigs to The Midnight Kiss I thought that screen dementia had made its most violent manifestation. But along comes Universal and does something much crazier. On my list of ten best pictures of 1927 I placed The Symphony, a Universal production directed by Harmon Weight. It is a picture with a feeling and charm that should win it the praise of all its viewers who appreciate something fine in the way of screen entertainment. Its name has been changed to Jazz Mad. Can't you just see the New York office gloating over such a swell box-office name? Jazz, my boy, is what they crave! That name will pack 'em in! Symphony? You can't get 'em with that highbrow stuff. I quite agree with this reasoning. Jazz Mad will pack them in—for the first

showing. It will attract the jazzy crowd and it will see a picture as far removed from what they expected to find as is The Callahans and Murphys from Hamlet. The magnificent performance of Jean Hersholt, the beautiful love story between Marian Nixon and George Lewis, the tenderness and beauty of the treatment will be lost on any audience that could be attracted by such a title. And the people who could enjoy such a picture will shun one with such a title. Thus Universal loses both ways. It is word-of-mouth advertising that makes a picture successful or a failure. Symphony will be knocked by everyone who is attracted to it by its new title. The most charitable view to take of the reason for the change is that someone with power to make it suddenly has gone mad. I hope it is not Uncle Carl. I like him too well.

THERE were several previews of The Garden of Eden in which Charlie Ray plays opposite Corinne Griffith. I saw one of them. Charlie's first appearance on the screen was greeted with a burst of applause from all over the house. I am told that the same thing happened at each of the other previews. In the picture he justifies the applause by giving a superb performance. Ever since I started The Spectator I have insisted that Ray is one of our half dozen best actors, and I am confident that his mastery of his art and the appeal of his personality make him one of the most popular men who appear on the screen. When Ray was being considered for this part in The Garden of Eden he came to me and asked me why everyone was knocking him by spreading the report that he was through and no longer had any box-office value. The sad part of it is that it was true that such reports were circulating through the studios, and if Johnnie Considine were not such a clear thinker as he is he probably would have been scared out of casting Charlie in the part. But he did cast him, and when he heard the applause of the preview audiences I hope that Johnnie felt that he was entitled to it. Ray not only is one of the very best leading men in the business, having a line of comedy that no one else even can approach, but he is immensely popular throughout the world, the vicious scandal-mongers of Hollywood to the contrary notwithstanding.

WHEN looking about for ways to improve their pictures directors might consider the question of shooting screen conversations. At present no imagination is expended on such scenes, and there is no scene in any picture too unimportant to entitle it to all the thought that can be spent on it. The usual method of presenting a conversation is to show two heads in close-ups spouting

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BARBED WIRE
CAMILLE
MY BEST GIRL
THE SYMPHONY
THE GAUCHO

WM. K. HOWARD

Director of WHITE GOLD

JOHN FARROW

Titled

White Gold

On The Spectator's List of 10 Best Pictures of the Year

Now Writing
TOWARD THE MOON
An Original for DE MILLE

TAY GARNETT

Wrote the Screen Play for

White Gold

In Collaboration with

GARRETT FORT

KENNETH THOMPSON

Male Lead in

White Gold

On The Spectator's List of 10 Best Pictures of the Year

titles at one another, the heads being directed badly and the titles punctuated badly. You practically never see a friendly conversation put on the screen in any way resembling what it would be like in real life. On the screen the characters are stiff and strike impossible poses; in real life they relax and are comfortable. The other day I called on a director in his office. After he greeted me he sank down in his chair, put both his feet on his desk, tilted back, and when he was not talking to me he was trying to balance a ruler on his chin. His whole attitude was a perfect example of absolute comfort, both mental and physical. I sat on the end of his desk, swung my legs and struck at an occasional fly with my walking stick. If that very director found that very scene in a script, do you suppose he would shoot it that way? Not on your life! He would tell you that it was not natural.

NO ONE can dispute the fact that there should be comedy every place in a picture where there is room for it. No opportunity to amuse an audience should be overlooked. Producers think that the public is amused only when it laughs out loud, and this is responsible for the "comedy relief" that harms so many pictures. It is responsible also for that weird invention, the comedy constructor, who never yet has contrived anything half so funny as the idea that he is necessary. A store window full of puppies will have a crowd in front of it all day. A litter of pups at play is about as amusing as any form of entertainment that can be devised, yet you might stand at the window all day without hearing anyone near you laugh out loud. Pictures could be made much more amusing than they are if producers would spend more thought

on getting chuckles and less on unnatural ways of getting loud guffaws. Laughs are created by someone with a sense of humor, and humor can not be "constructed". If a director devoted his attention to producing chuckles he would find that the laughs would take care of themselves.

T ABOUT the same time Equity and the Writers Guild made official demands on the producers' association for the adoption of standard contracts. On August tenth last the Hays organization wrote Equity that at a meeting of the association held that day no action was taken on the matter as the association felt that the Biltmore conferences had settled everything, making any action unnecessary. By November twenty-nine the Hays organization got around to the writers' request. On that day it wrote the Guild that as there had been no meeting of the association from June thirteen to November twentynine the matter could not be taken up sooner. The letter went on to say that the producers felt that they could do nothing in the matter as it was outside their jurisdiction. Once more: To Equity the Hays organization wrote that it met in August and intimated that it could act on the matter if it were necessary to do so; to the Guild it wrote that there had been no meeting from June to November, and intimated that it was powerless to do anything even if it wanted to. Recently in The Spectator I called it a brainless organization with a brainless head.

A MONG the many things to admire in Lewis Milestone's direction of The Garden of Eden is the manner in which he introduces his characters. He proceeds on the theory that no character is of any importance until he

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The Neighbor in Barbed Wire The Dictator in The Gaucho



Both Productions on Welford Beaton's Ten Best Pictures of the Year comes into the story. In shots of the hotel lobby we catch glimpses of Edward Martindel moving about, but the camera pays no attention to him until he enters a scene and speaks to Louise Dresser. This brings him into the story, and he is introduced. In an earlier sequence Lowell Sherman enters a night club. The camera follows him all over the place, showing us only his back, until he encounters another character and comes into the story. Then we are shown his face, and he is introduced. This is the correct method. When the star of a production makes his first appearance in the picture at a social gathering, he is of no more importance than any other guest until he does something to indicate that he is going to be of importance to the story, and he should be introduced when he does this something, not before.

ON THE back page of this issue of The Spectator is an advertisement that I tried hard to refuse. When I reviewed The Private Life of Helen of Troy I stated that Maria Corda should not have been cast for the name part. When Alexander Korda sent in copy for the advertisement I assumed that it was for the purpose of establishing the fact that competent critics disagreed with me, and I informed him that as I did not write reviews to provoke people into buying advertising space in which to combat my views, I would be glad to print anything he wanted to say, and that there would be no charge. But Korda would have none of that. We smoked a couple of cigars (his) over it, and as he stuck to his determination that it had to be an advertisement or nothing, I let him have his way. But I want it understood that the pages of The Spectator are open at all times to those who disagree with me, and that there will be no charge for space used to prove me wrong.

A DOLPHE Menjou is quoted as saying that stars are going to be eliminated because producers will refuse to sign them. Stars are made by the public, not by contracts. Adolphe takes a too modest view of his own accomplishments if he attributes his drawing power to the fact that Paramount rates him as a star. He is a star because the public likes him. He will continue to be a star for as long as the liking lasts, even though all the producers on earth entered into a conspiracy to keep him from being called one. We always will have such stars, and, moreover, they always will draw enormous salaries, for the public fixes the salaries as it does the fame. Both are matters over which producers have no lasting control. The public has a way of doing what it pleases and refuses to accept motion pictures at their own valuation.

ONSIDER the pictures which since 1920 have won Photoplay's gold medal: Humoresque, Tol'able David, Robin Hood, Covered Wagon, Abraham Lincoln, Big Parade, and, last year, Beau Geste. Not a suggestion of sex in any one of them. Recall to your mind great pictures that you have seen. Those that come most promptly to you were free from sex. No star identified with sexy pictures has lasted on the screen. Without exception every man or woman who has been a favorite with the public for more than five years never was identified with pictures that dealt with problems of sex. Yet it is a great theme, the greatest of all. The fact that it has not done

well on the screen does not condemn it as a theme, but is a reflection on the treatment accorded it. It has been made vulgar, and nothing vulgar can survive in screen art or in any other art.

THAT there is no such thing in a motion picture as an unimportant scene is a statement that The Spectator has made quite often. Story interest must be maintained from the beginning to the end of a picture. There should be no let-down when a butler opens a door, a postman delivers a letter or a waiter takes an order. Such scenes should be shot only after all their possibilities have been studied. A caller exchanging pleasantries with a butler registers the fact that the caller is a friend of the family, and the exchange serves to maintain the smooth unfolding of the story. The director who puts lifeless servants on the screen shows that he does not know servants nor how to tell a story. Cecil de Mille never has an unimportant scene in one of his pictures. All his unimportant scenes are important.

A MONTH or more ago the Associated Press carried a story quoting Col. Charles R. Forbes to the effect that Will Hays took a hand in a poker game in the White House. Right after the story appeared clippings containing it began to pour in on me, the senders, of course, expecting me to comment on it. This week two of the clippings came in from English readers of The Spectator, and one from someone in Berlin. What am I supposed to say? I have been fighting Will, not boosting him. Forbes proves that our czar is a dead game sport, which is more than I expected, and anything I could say about it would be in the way of praise, which I am too stingy to give.

PURELY as an act of friendship that reflects my warm regard for the Hays organization, I would like to inform it that it need go no farther in its investigation of my connection with a lumber journal in the Northwest. I never owned a lumber paper, I never worked on one, I never wrote a line for one, and I never read one. It's a waste of time to follow that lead. Surely Mr. Hays can find one more promising and one that might lead to the achievement of the desire of his bosses to drive me out of Hollywood. I'd like to make a sporting proposition to the Hays organization. When it has completed investigating my record from the cradle to the present I will publish its findings in The Spectator.

SOLICITORS are now at work trying to intimidate motion picture people into buying space in the Second Annual Hold-Up Number of the Los Angeles Times. "Then you deliberately wish to cut yourself off from The Times?" said one of the salesmen to an actor who refused to take space. When the number appears it will be interesting to see how many people submitted to the veiled threats.

A CORRESPONDENT wants to know when I am going to stop yapping about the punctuation of titles. Probably quite soon. I have done the best I can to keep some producers and supervisors from turning out the kind of punctuation that advertises to the world what hopeless lowbrows they are, and if they are content, I suppose I should be.

WILD GEESE

—a TIFFANY production on Welford Beaton's list of Ten Best Pictures in 1927.

Directed by

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NORMA TALMADGE
IN
CAMILLE

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EDWIN CAREWE

CO-PRODUCER AND DIRECTOR

of

"RESURRECTION"

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AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By DONALD BEATON - The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

A LTHOUGH it took a long time getting started, 13 Washington Square became a very good picture later on. Mel Brown's direction left nothing to be desired and fine performances by the entire cast contrib-uted a great deal. Harry Hoyt's adaptation was very adroitly done and a new twist was given the story by fooling the characters and not the audience. Although one knew that there was nothing sinister going on, the creeping around in the dark house was quite eery. Everything was done very logically, and there was nothing unex-plained. There was one clever little scene where the boy and the girl pushed a paper under the locked door and then pushed the key out so that it would fall on the paper. Their surprise when they found that the key was not on the paper was very cleverly done. Jean Hersholt and Alice Joyce headed the cast of 13 Washington Square. Hersholt gave one of his marvelous performances, as usual, but his part was not the size which he deserves. Alice Joyce's characterization was as finely and beautifully done as hers usually are. Zazu Pitts contributed a great deal to the picture with her superb comedy. George Lewis did one of the best jobs of acting he has done yet. Helen Foster was also pleas-ing. Walter Anthony's titles were excellent.

NE Woman to Another is a silly picture with a silly little plot and some silly little titles by George Marion. Some of Marion's titles were amusing, however, something the rest of the picture never was. The story was old and uninteresting. All stories these days seem to be that way. If somebody would only get a few new ideas, pictures would improve a great deal. Frank Tuttle didn't make use of what good situations he had to make the picture amusing. In one scene Theodore von Eltz comes into a room and all but stumbles on Florence Vidor. While he is standing within three feet of her, she sneezes and moves, yet he hears nothing. Her brother, who was supposed to be in China for six months, returns unexpectedly and never sends her word of the fact. There were many inconsistencies in the picture. In fact, the only consistent thing about it was its poorness. One Woman to Another contained a pair of clever children, Joyce Coad and Jimmy Boudwin. Joyce is far more at her ease on the screen than the majority of adult actors and actresses and should go far. Hedda Hopper gave a good performance, as did Shirley Dorman.

Some Body made a desperate effort to make London After Midnight a weird picture. He succeeded, but there was no reason for all the weirdness. At the end of the picture the mystery was still just as deep about some things as it was at

the beginning. Lon Chaney did the usual weird things with his face, and he certainly achieved some fearful and wonderful effects. In one scene a man stood within two feet of another and shot a blank cartridge at his head. It was all only an experiment, but the wadding of a blank cartridge is dangerous at that close range. However, they went through with it. It wasn't necessary to do that, because if there were no cartridges, blank or otherwise, in the gun the man would have been in no danger and the man who shot the gun would have been incriminated just the same. There was too much striving for effect in the whole picture. It didn't ring true, so one didn't care what happened to any of the characters. If it had been a bit more true to life, the perils of the characters would have been more real and terrifying. After it was all over one was still wondering what it was all about. Lon Chaney deserves something bigger than third rate mystery stories.

THE High School Hero is interesting for two things: It is the first directorial effort of David Butler, hitherto an actor; and it is about a phase of life never before put on the screen. Butler has achieved something in being both a good actor and a good director. Despite the handicap of having no story to speak of, there is something about The High School Hero which is very pleasing. For one thing, there is no heavy who goes scowling about unnaturally. All the acting is so natural and unaffected that one enjoys it a great deal. Butler's grouping of characters on the screen is poorly done and archaic. They always line up and face the camera as though the scene were a picture for a newspaper. There were several very good bits of comedy which were well done. The characterization of the old Latin teacher was good. Some of Butler's directorial stunts are like Marshall Neilan's whimsical little touches which have nothing to do with the story but do not hinder its unfolding. That is the mark of a good director. If he can put in comedy that has nothing to do with the story and yet not hinder the telling of it, he is a good director. Of course, The High School Hero had no story, so nothing could hinder it, but I think that if he had one, Butler still could ring in the comedy successfully.

There was a clever trio of young actors in The High School Hero, Nick Stuart, John Darrow, and David Rollins. They could give most of the old timers on the screen points on how to act. Sally Phipps was satisfactory in a smaller part.

THE limits in the massacring of stage plays have been reached in The Gorilla. What was a good stage play has been turned into a terrible picture. I didn't catch who was responsible for the direction, but it is just as well. As it is I don't know whom to blame. There were a lot of attempts at comedy through the medium of moronish titles, but they all fell flat. The picture was too short, and none of it was explained at the end. The billing outside of the theatre hailed it as the greatest comedy hit of the year. If there were any worse comedies I sure would hate to see them. There was no suspense in the mystery at all, as the heavy, Walter Pidgeon, was unlike any of the other members of the cast in figure, and it was easy to tell from his back who he was, and so there was no mystery at all. The whole thing was too mixed up, anyway, to make anybody inter-ested in it. The two detectives were so dumb that they never would have gotten on any police force. However, in dumbness they had nothing on the rest of the picture. The heat out in the valley is slowly getting the First National bunch.

A S I am about the only person in the United States who is able to read and has not read Uncle Tom's Cabin, I looked forward with pleasure to seeing the picture. Nor was I disappointed. Except for spots where the emotion was slathered on too thickly, the picture was well done and interesting, but it can be cut a great deal yet. There was one scene where Eliza rushes off the boat to rescue her boy, who is being carried off in a wagon. She breaks away from the men who are chasing her

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about four times and catches up with the wagon. Four times they break her away until it gets tiresome. could be cut down very much without lessening the fact that Eliza loved her child. Harry Pollard's direction of the scenes depicting the negro revival meetings was done with great cleveress except where he allowed some needless slap-stick to come in. The scene was quite funny enough without resorting to any unnecessary stuff like that. Also, towards the close of the picture Sherman's army marching through Georgia was dragged in rather roughly. To my mind, to have to resort to the patriotic instincts of an audience to get applause is rather outworn showmanship. The picture was good enough without that. The scene where little Eva died apparently didn't appeal to Dad, but I thought it was very touching. However, the rest of the sad scenes in the picture didn't arouse any sympathy in me. Uncle Tom's Cabin is unique in that it is about the first famous novel and play which had trouble in production and yet managed to become a good picture. Anna Karenina is a shining example of the other kind.

TNCLE TOM'S CABIN had a very good cast, but owing to the idiotic method of putting the whole cast down at the beginning of the picture there were several names I didn't get. Arthur Edmund Carew, who is one of the men on the screen who is always excellent but is still given small parts, did one little bit of acting in the picture which topped all the others, good as they were, by a wide margin. There is one scene where Carew is informed that the man who is renting him is trying to buy his freedom. He doesn't indulge in any wild acting, but he puts over the bit admirably. He is one of the screen's finest actors and should be seen more often. Lucien Littlefield gave one of the comedy performances that have made him famous. Mar-guerita Fischer was good as Eliza. The man who played Uncle Tom was excellent. I couldn't get his name. Lloyd Nosler did a good job of cutting the huge mass of film down to somewhere near feature length.

TEXT to the Beery and Hatton pictures, I think the worst pictures Paramount is turning out right now are the Bebe Daniels atrocities. She's A Shiek is as bad as the rest, a little worse in fact. Apparently there was a good deal of money spent on the production, but it all went to waste. The whole thing was so silly that it seems impossible that sensible human beings could sit around and throw so much money away on such a lot of drivel. Clarence Badger was charged with the direction. George Marion did a pretty good job of the titles. Among the numerous bad things about the picture was the fact that a brilliant actor like William Powell was made to furnish a lot of slapstick comedy. He

was supposed to be the scourge of the desert and a regular rip-snorting bad man, yet he was made to act like a half-wit all through the picture. If he had been such a silly, weak creature as he was made out, he never would have become the dreaded leader of a great band of Arabs. The Foreign Lgion post in the picture had dancing every night and many women strewn around, yet it was so dangerous that officers wore side-arms constantly. The whole picture was full of choice little mistakes like that.

NYONE who thinks that there is some danger of England's usurping America's monopoly of good motion pictures should see Mademoiselle From Armentieres, England's Big Parade. Mademoiselle From Armentieres would have been a good picture about ten years ago, but its story and treatment are too old and crude for the average American motion picture nowadays. The story is the old one about the girl who traps a spy for the benefit of her country and has her motives misunderstood by her lover. Of course, everything turns out all right. There is one thing in the picture which is good. As the troops are going into the trenches, a star shell lights up the scene. Immediately all the men stand still, not moving or making a sound. They do it several times, and it is very impressive. The war stuff was pretty well done. The villain of the piece is a spy who is so obviously one that a two year old child would have arrested him after one good look at him. All the characters were poorly drawn. Mademoiselle From Armentieres should interest American audiences very much, however.

HICAGO, made from the play of that name, is a pretty good picture. Phyllis Haver carries the whole thing on her shoulders and makes a very good job of it. By the end of the picture, one despises her thoroughly, which is the effect she is working for. Her acting is a remarkable piece of craftsmanship all the way through. The satire, which seems subtle enough on the stage, is rather crude on the screen, but that is to be expected. The medium of titles is not good for clever and subtle satire, no matter who writes the titles. The picture is slow getting under way, but it goes well, once started. Frank Urson's direction is to be complimented, because he made a good picture of what might have been very easily a poor one. There were some clever scenes in court with the jury. As a matter of fact, there were clever touches all through, with the ending predominating. The titles at the end had a double meaning, and gave one just the impression that he was going to marry the right girl. Phyllis Haver didn't have a monopoly on the good acting in Chicago, however. Victor Varconi, who played the husband, gave one of his usual good performances, and so did Robert Edeson, as the

attorney. Virginia Bradford, who is a newcomer who knows her stuff, was also in the cast.

RELATIONS

N Relations at Wilkes' Vine Street Theatre, Hollywood has an effort that merits better treatment than it is receiving at the hands of the pub-The cast is not composed entirely lic. The cast is not composed entirely of big names, therefore the play receives scant support which is not very encouraging to people who try, through honest effort, to advance the cause of the little theatre. Relations has some clever dialogue. The play may be a little crude in parts, but it gets constant laughs and the human interest is really very well developed and sustained, particularly in the third act. Of the cast, Edward Clark, who is also the author, and Barbara Brown are especially effective, putting little personal touches into their work. Mabel Forrest comes next in a role rather similar to the one she had in So This Is Love!, and Albert Van Antwerp, the male lead, although rather lacking in professional polish, makes quite good use of his dramatic moments. The play is essentially human and if you took the time to go I don't think you would regret it.

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CONRAD VEIDT

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SYMPHONY

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Story by

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Author of Grease Paint, Conrade Veidt's next starring vehicle

ADAPTATION and CONTINUITY

by

Charles Kenyon

SYMPHONY

THE FOREIGN LEGION

In Preparation: SHOW BOAT

What Critics Think of

EDWARD LE MARIA CORDA

As "HELEN" in

"The Private Life of Helen of Troy"

MORDAUNT HALL, New York Times-

"No better choice than Maria Corda could have been made for the role of Helen. She is quietly amusing, graceful, fascinating and fully cognizant of her feminine attraction as the fair lady who stirred up wars."

QUIN MARTIN, New York World-

"To me this Maria Corda is an amazingly attractive young woman, gifted with grace and poise and, as luck would have it, a definite Helen manner."

NEW YORK TELEGRAPH—

"Maria Corda is as a brilliant gem in a finely wrought setting, her face keenly expressive of the intelligence which guides her in the part."

JOSEPH M'ELLIOTT, New York Mirror

"She is exceedingly capable and she hereby places herself high up in the list of movie actresses."

HARRIETTE UNDERHILL, Herald Tribune-

"Miss Corda seems to be a rather fine comedienne."

ROSE PELSWICK, Evening Journal—

"Miss Corda is effective and very decorative in her chiffon togas."

NEW YORK SUN-

"She is a welcome addition to Hollywood's roster of European beauties."

PROF. JOHN ERSKINE—

"I had no idea when I created the modern version of Helen that there actually existed a person who realized this character to a nicety. In Miss Corda I see a perfect visualization of Helen."

"After seeing this lovely picture, and meeting Miss Maria Corda, who plays Helen, I forgot, just what had been my original conception of the face that launched a thousand ships."

GEORGE GERHARD, Evening World-

"Probably the greatest achievement in the making of this picture was the acquisition of Mme. Maria Corda, the brilliantly beautiful Hungarian actress, for the part of Helen. She was perfect in her piquant exotic manner, and her very strangeness to the silver screen contributed to her felicitous performance. Doubtless any Hollywood luminary would have looked out of place in this character."

REGINA CANNON, New York American

"Maria Corda makes an exquisitely beautiful Helen and gives a sincere performance after her own interpretation of the role."

Edited by WELFORD BEATON

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The Spectator and Motion Picture Producers

How Universal treats one of its young players

The Editor is offered a good job if he'll abandon Spectator

Fox makes truly great picture in "Grandma Bernle"

> CHICAGO LADY OF VICTORIES SKINNER'S BIG IDEA UNDER THE BLACK EAGLE

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He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., JANUARY 21, 1928

Won't Let Me Leave the Producers Alone

SPECTATOR readers are a bloodthirsty lot. It would surprise you to know how many subscribers have reresented the fact that the past two numbers of this peace-loving and dignified journal did not hurl verbal bombs at those who make our motion pictures. Since the first of last October the circulation of The Spectator has more than doubled. This means that it has several thousand new readers who might reasonably hold the opinion that the chief mission of the paper was to hiss at Louis B. Mayer and to sprinkle epithets on the heads of all other producers. The first few numbers which the new subscribers read were filled more or less with strong language-and now I find that they do not want to be fed on any other diet. I sympathize with them. The kind of stuff they want to read is precisely the kind of stuff that I got the most kick out of writing, but is it fair to keep on attacking producers without slowing up long enough to see if the attacks thus far have borne any fruit? A few silly people asked me if my silence on the topic of producer iniquities were prompted by overtures from the producers themselves, the insinuation being that perhaps I had sold out. No one need worry about that. I was given no opportunity to sell out. The producers treated me precisely as I would have treated them if the conditions had been reversed: they have ignored me completely. I must give them credit for having that much sense. On the quiet, of course, they took me seriously, but nothing that they have done publicly would indicate that they know I am alive. True, one of them, as I relate farther on in this number, offered me a good job if I would drop The Spectator, which may or may not have been part of a concerted plan to get rid of me, but beyond that they have made no attempt to buy me off. I paused in my campaign against their methods entirely without their prompting. The campaign did some good. Blacklisting is not practiced so openly now. One producer acknowledged to me that they had carried it too far and that the fuss The Spectator kicked up about it having attracted the attention of the United States Department of Justice, the outcome might be extremely embarrassing to the producers. Such being

the case, what was to be gained by continuing the heavy firing? Special agents of the Department of Justice are busy in Hollywood investigating block-booking, blacklisting and other nefarious practices of the producers, and some time next summer there will be an explosion which will reveal the rottenness of the business administration of the picture industry. It will not make the producers ethical business men. Only God could do that, and He seems to have abandoned them. They still will take every unfair advantage of those who work for them that their intriguing minds can conceive. The Spectator deems it its duty to endeavor to force them to be decent. Its readers may feel reassured on that point. There will be no sell-out. One can write convincingly only when he himself is convinced, and as I am convinced that screen workers should be treated decently I must of necessity continue the espousal of their cause.

How Universal Treats Young Arthur Lake

CTORS and directors should be on the alert against the blandishments of the producers. You see quite often in the papers that John Doe, producer, gave Richard Roe, actor, a delightful surprise the day previous by tearing up an old contract and substituting a new long term one. When you read such a story you may be sure that the actor got the worst of it. Let us take a specific example. You have read or soon will read, that Carl Laemmle, out of the fullness of his heart, has elevated Arthur Lake to a state of ecstatic bliss by giving the clever young comedian a new long term contract. Sam Jacobsen, the also clever publicity manager out at Universal, will endeavor to create the impression that his boss should be presented with a large medal for his generous treatment of Arthur. We will examine the facts. Arthur's present contract still has eighteen months to run. He is an exceedingly clever youngster, a fact that Universal, during the time it has had him under contract, has not established. He made his hit when he was borrowed for Cradle Snatchers. In spite of his success in that picture Universal did nothing to develop him, giving him only a few small parts and putting him in a series of one-reel comedies. With intelligent handling he could be by this time one of the best box-office bets in the business, but that is by the way. First National wanted Arthur to play the name part in Harold Teen. It is to be a big production and Arthur is so well suited to the part that it would be a crime to cast anyone else in it. The very thought of playing it gave the young actor spasms of joy. Universal was approached by First National. Henry Henigson, general manager of Universal, sent for Arthur's mother, Arthur being a minor, and told her that Arthur would be allowed to play Harold Teen only on condition that she sign for him a five-year prolongation of his present contract. She refused to do this. My good friend Henry told Mrs. Lake that unless she signed the new contract he would keep Arthur in one-reel comedies for the rest of his present contract and see that his career was not advanced; that there was no use of her trying to deal with any other studio because all the producers were in an organization that backed up each of its members and that Arthur would find himself blacklisted unless he re-signed with Universal at Universal's terms. Mrs. Lake pleaded that Arthur be allowed to play in Harold

Teen to establish his value, and that then a new contract could be drawn up with the new valuation as the basis. This would not suit Universal. Producers do not pay actors what they are worth. They pay them the smallest salaries they can be bulldozed into accepting. If Universal had been actuated by ethical business motives it could not have advanced threats as a reason for anyone signing a contract with it. Holding out blacklisting as an alternative to signing such contract is morally on a par with dangling a blackjack in front of a pedestrian as a reason why he should hand over his watch. But producers do it. Mrs. Lake resented the treatment, but Arthur's heart was set on playing Harold and, motherlike, she yielded. So when you read of Carl Laemmle's generosity in this instance, remember a clean-minded, clever, mother-loving boy who thinks more of his art than of his salary, and who for six and a half years must work for people who obtained his services by threatening to terminate his career before he became of age unless he did as he was ordered.

One Reason for the High Production Cost

NE day recently I accompanied a director to a projection room to look at his previous day's shooting. The first thing I saw was a long shot of a man entering a dimly lighted library, stealthily traversing its full length, extracting something from a wall safe, and making his exit through the door he had entered. I knew nothing of the story, whether the man was the hero or the heavy, or what he took from the safe, but the scene gripped me. There always is drama in a stealthy figure in a darkened room. The actor paused at intervals and gazed intently at a door opposite the one by which he had entered. I could not catch the expression on his face, but I knew that he thought someone was in the other room and was fearful that he might be disturbed. The scene thrilled me, and I breathed a sigh of relief when the intruder made his escape safely. Four times the scene was shown in long shots. I do not know why, for all the shots looked alike to me and I could not see that it made any difference which one was used. Then I sat for an hour and watched the same scene broken into medium shots and close-ups. Every time the actor paused and looked at the door his face was picked out in a close-up, there was a close-up of his hands on the dial of the safe, and a succession of them showing his face as he stood by the safe. After the lights were turned on I questioned the director about the scene and found out that the previous action would acquaint the audience with the man's identity and why he wanted certain papers that were in the safe. This means that the only value in the scene was the character's success or failure, and this was established dramatically in the long shot. Every time there would be a cut in the finished picture to a medium shot or a close-up the thrill would be broken. I told the director that I thought the whole scene should be shown in a sustained long shot, and he said he agreed with me. I asked him why he had spent so much time in repeating the entire action in medium shots and again in close-ups. He looked at me in surprise. "These scenes always are shot that way," he said, and seemed to consider his answer complete. Anyone with the slightest knowledge of picture

practices knows how this dramatic scene will appear on the screen. The fact that the audience's sole interest lies in the man's effort to secure the papers will be lost sight of, and the film editor will show us a succession of shots revealing his mental reaction to his adventure, something that is of no importance whatever. The medium shots and close-ups are there for the editor to use, and they will become the weapons with which the drama in the scene will be killed. The head of the studio which is making this picture was quoted in a trade paper recently to the effect that production costs must come down, yet I am willing to bet him a hat that if this director had contented himself with the long shot and saved all the time and expense that the medium shots and close-ups were responsible for, the producer would have endorsed the roar of the supervisor and probably would have fired the director. The producer's plan for bringing down production cost is by lowering the salaries of those who create his pictures, and he will not permit them to create them in a manner that would effect such a saving that lowering salaries would not be necessary. Because he himself is ignorant of the manner in which pictures should be made he indulges the ignorance of those whom he hires to make them, and he is too dense to see that the faulty methods that make pictures cost more than they should also detract so much from their quality that they do not earn as much as they should. Production costs certainly are too high, but the reason for it is not the salaries of directors and actors, but is the blundering incapacity of the producers themselves.

In Which We Tell of Being Offered Job

DAY or two after my experience in the projection room, as recorded in the previous paragraph, I met by appointment one of the biggest figures in the production end of pictures, a man known all over the world, and one whose position with his company carries with it the authority to bind the company with any contract he sees fit to sign. He told me that his reading of The Spectator had satisfied him that I had a picture mind that would be of value to his company, that if I would abandon The Spectator and give all my attention to his pictures he would give me a long-time contract calling for a salary that would make me rich. I gave him no answer, and steered the conversation into a discussion of the safecracking scene. I told him that I thought it should be shown only in a sustained long shot, with no break in it. He laughed at me. "The American public wants faces," he declared. "It wants to see what the characters are thinking about. And anyway," he went on "why shouldn't the whole thing be shot over again in medium shots and close-ups? Raw stock is the cheapest thing on the lot." Do you wonder at the high cost of production? Don't you see the hopelessness of expecting a reduction? Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent by this man in making pictures and he still thinks that raw stock is cheap. Film is by long odds the most expensive thing ! on every lot. Every foot of it carries the grotesque salaries paid to executives, the expensive blunders of executives, the idle time of contract players; it carries every charge from interest on capital investment to telegraph tolls on messages from the studio to the home office ex-

tolling the virtues of pictures that are not yet completed. Raw stock is time, and time is the principle thing that any manufacturing company has to transform into money. And while he was spending his hundreds of millions making pictures this producer never learned that the American public is sick of looking at faces, and that it would hail with joy the advent of a new note in screen art. By virtue of his position this man stands squarely in the way of artistic progress in as far as his studio can have an effect upon it. But there is a still more important sidelight that our conversation casts on picture production. For the purpose of my argument we must assume that the producer was right in his estimate of my picture mind and the value it could be to his company. Say I accepted his proposition and entered his employ at the large salary he would be willing to pay me. The first thing that my picture mind would dictate would be that the safe-cracking scene should be shot only in a long shot and that no time should be spent on a series of medium shots and close-ups which only would weaken the sequence on the screen if it included them. And the first thing my new boss would say would be that I was crazy and knew nothing about pictures. I would be up against a condition that now discourages scores of people with much more capable picture minds than mine: the utter impossibility of using their picture minds to turn out better pictures. An assured position for a long term of years at a salary that would make me rich is an alluring prospect, but when it carries with it a constant fight with a producer to adopt a plan that would make him more money—well, it's comfortable in the easy chair in which I write, my pipe is drawing nicely, there is a dog in my lap and a cat on my reading table, by my side the day's letters telling me of additional people who like The Spectator-

"Grandma Bernle" a Notable Picture

OX has made another notable contribution to screen art. Grandma Bernle Learns Her Letters is a noble picture; it is a glorious and impressive tribute to mother-love, a great, human masterpiece that will provoke the world's tears and smiles. Like its studio-mate, Seventh Heaven, it is a ten-reel heart-throb, and like its other studio-mate, Sunrise, it is a production that motion picture people can study with profit to themselves. John Ford previously had given us nothing to prepare us for the depth of feeling that he reveals in this picture, although he hinted at it in Three Bad Men. I am hampered somewhat in reviewing Grandma Bernle by the fact that I saw it at its first preview, when I estimated that it was between eleven and twelve reels. If I guessed rightly, almost two reels would have to come out to bring the picture down to proper length. As a picture can be made or marred when it has to be submitted to that much cutting, I do not know how it will emerge, but that it will emerge as anything but a truly great picture I do not fear. Like all notable screen stories must be, this one can be told in a night letter without reaching its limit of words. Grandma Bernle lives in a Bavarian village with her four sons. One of them goes to America, the three others are killed in the war, and she goes to America to live with the surviving son, whose offspring gives her her status as a grandmother. That is all. But it unfolds before us with a majestic, emotional sweep that plays on our heart-strings as Seventh Heaven did. It is not like Sunrise in which the director steps to the front and takes all the bows, attracting our attention with his grand flourishes and subjugating the story to his manner of telling it. In Grandma Bernle John Ford stays in the background and we scarcely are aware of his presence, but no picture ever was directed with more consummate skill. When Grandma's boys are marching off to war she sits on the steps at the back of her house. We look past her to the street beyond. It is full of troops with whom the villagers keep pace as they bid farewell. It is a long shot that contains several buildings and hundreds of people, and Grandma sits in the deep forground, alone, not looking at the troops, not moving, but dominating the scene because we know what it means to her, as we know what it meant to all other mothers who sent sons to the front. It is inspired direction of a piece with scores of other scenes. When the fatal, mourning-bordered letter comes to tell the old woman that her third son is dead she is kneeling before a chest, seeking something in it. Her back is to the camera. Past her we see through the open window the postman approaching. He holds up the letter. She sees it and understands. Slowly she lowers the lid of the chest, places her arms on it and buries her head in them. All of it is shown in the same deep-medium shot, with Grandma's back always to the camera. More superb direction that lends a new dignity to screen art. In a previous scene Grandma receives news of the death of two sons. She does not weep. We are spared a close-up of her agonized features. She walks from the room to a bedroom and seats herself beside the bed in which the two boys slept. It is a simple scene, yet a terrific one-one of the greatest that I ever saw in a motion picture. What amazes me about the three scenes I have mentioned is that Ford was allowed to shoot them as he did, and that they safely made the perilous passage through the projection room. Where were the supervisors who insist that points can be registered only in close-ups?

John Ford Directs In Masterly Manner

RANDMA Bernle pays a greater compliment to audiences than any other picture ever made. Some of its strongest bits of business are little more than suggested, and unobtrusively, at that, in medium and long shots. And Ford does something else that I never saw done so effectively in any other picture: he keeps the camera for a long time on scenes in which the characters are almost static. One such scene shows the four boys gathered around their mother's chair. For several seconds the scene is held on the screen, with no one in it moving. Another scene shows the old woman, her last son gone, sitting in her rocking chair. She rocks back and forth, back and forth, with no movement except that of the chair, her face set and expressionless. In handling these scenes in this manner Ford gets right down to the fundamentals of the screen. Motion is not necessary to every scene in a motion picture. The only thing of importance in any scene is the reaction it causes. While motion on the screen may cease, there must be no cessation in the emotional activity of the audience. The scene showing the four boys around their mother has cumulative force. A flash of it

would mean something, but the longer it is held the greater meaning it has. When its action ceases, the action goes on in the mind of the audience, and the longer it looks at the mother it loves surrounded by the sons she loves the more the humanness of it sinks into the audience mind. The only danger in holding a scene on the screen lies in not knowing when to terminate it. Grandma Bernle is cut perfectly in as far as these scenes are concerned. I will give you an example of one of the many powerful little touches put over in medium shots. The Prussian officers call on Grandma Bernle and tell her that her last son must go to war. They are ruthless and cruel. As they stalk out of the house, one, the youngest among them, pauses at the door, turns, crosses to the old woman and kisses her hand, then makes a hasty exit. There is a wealth of feeling in that scene and none of it is shown in close-up. But while Ford refuses to show us close-ups of his principle characters in their greatest emotional moments, he proceeds to give us a succession of huge close-ups of people who have not appeared in the picture previously and whom we do not see again, people who are not introduced and who show but slight movement. Thus in the same picture Ford defies the convention that proscribes close-ups of his leading characters and also that which is opposed to their use for showing characters who have not been introduced to the audience. And in both respects the scenes have been shot with great intelligence. The huge close-ups are those of American soldiers as they register their reaction to a cry that comes to them from no-man's land, a cry of a dying boy for his mother. This whole sequence is one of the strongest that I have seen on any screen. Perhaps Grandma Bernle will not do as well at the box-office as The Big Parade has done, but it is an infinitely better war picture because mother-love is a greater theme than boy-and-girl love. It is a picture that will give John Ford a permanent place among our few truly great directors. To enumerate all the strokes of directorial genius that enrich the picture would require more space that I could devote to it, so the few I mention give you no adequate impression of the splendid work that Ford has done. His grouping is perfect throughout and he has extracted from the remarkably fine production all the dramatic value there was in it. And now we come to the performances.

Earle Foxe Gives a Great Performance

RANDMA Bernle is, in my opinion, the best acted motion picture ever screened. The smallest bit is done perfectly and the leading parts are acted superbly. We thank Seventh Heaven for giving us Janet Gaynor, and we will thank Grandma Bernle for giving us Margaret Mann. Sacrificing gallantry to art, I would venture the guess that Miss Mann has passed sixty years of age. She never had done on the screen anything that attracted attention to her, yet she comes to the front in this picture with a performance that will rank among screen classics. She is the picture. Anything that happens in it interests as only to the extent that we feel it will affect Grandma Bernle. Ford has directed Miss Mann so admirably that in not one of the sequences does the dear old woman become a movie actress. In fact, there is no obvious acting in the entire picture. It is apparent in every scene that each principal lived his or her part and that Ford's direction did not concern itself with his actors' mechanics. No director can treat his cast as manikins and turn out such a perfectly acted picture. When Grandma Bernle is released Miss Mann will capture the heart of the world, a beautiful thing for a white-haired woman to do. Next to her performance will rank in public popularity that of Albert Gran, who is truly magnificent as the postmaster. There is more color to the part than there was to that of the taxi driver in Seventh Heaven and it gives Gran more opportunities to show us what a really good actor he is. He is so real in one sequence, when in bringing good news to Grandma Bernle he almost dances down the street, that the large preview audience rewarded his work with an outburst of hearty applause. But as fine as these two leading performances are, there is another in Grandma Bernle that for sheer artistry I believe is entitled to the first acting honors. Previously I had seen Earle Foxe only in the Van Bibber comedies with which Fox imperilled the memory of Richard Harding Davis, and could see nothing in his performances but a lot of meaningless grimaces. A genius with more picture wisdom & than I have, cast him in Grandma Bernle as the ranking Prussian officer, and he gives a performance that entitles him to recognition as a really fine actor. It is a mental performance, if you know what I mean. He is more a symbol than a person, a symbol of Prussianism with all the arrogance and domineering insolence characteristic of that curse of Central Europe. As you watch his performance you admire him for the grace of his military bearing, for the exquisitiveness of his swank, while you detest him for the refinement of his cruelty and for the heartlessness of his exercise of the power his position gives him. The world may not give Earle Foxe the credit due him for his work in this picture, but I think Hollywood will. Frank Reicher and Hughie Mack make big contributions to the acting wealth of the production. The four sons are played by James Hall, Francis X. Bushman, Jr., Charles Morton and George Meeker, and each of them does excellently. There is one bit done so well by a girl that I went to a lot of trouble to find out who she is. Catharine McDonnell, a beautiful blonde, stops Gran to ask if the fatal letter in his hand is for her. Her dread and then her relief are registered superbly. We will hear from her. Jack Pennock, Carl von Hartman, Harry Reinhart, John Peters, and Hans von Frieburg are some of the others who are entitled to special mention for their fine acting in small parts. In such a picture so crammed with merit, I can not do more than touch the high spots, for to do the production full justice would take more space than one Spectator can provide.

Shooting Scenes That Don't Reach the Screen

HERE are some things on the debit side of Grandma Bernle that it might profit us to discuss even though they be eliminated or tempered before the picture reaches the public. Previously in this Spectator I have touched on the excessive cost of production, and here we have a case in point. Millions of dollars are wasted in Hollywood every year because producers do not know what their stories are about. They build sets and pay actors to add sequences that detract from the stories.

Grandma Bernle is a striking example of this. Frau Bernle suffers more in eight or nine reels than any whitehaired woman should. Then she receives a letter from her son in America telling her that he is doing well and wants her to join him. That should mark the end of her tribulations. The audience has stood all it can, and its only desire is to see the fine old mother at peace in the home of her surviving son. The picture should have hurried on to its happy end. But it does not. At the preview I sat through almost two reels of more agony. The poor old woman fails to pass her examination at Ellis Island, her son fails to meet her, she wanders away with those who are admitted to the country, and we see her, lost, terrified, and pathetic, hopelessly traversing New York streets in a rain storm. It is produced, acted, and directed superbly, but it has no more to do with what the story really is about than would have some scenes showing Stewart Edward White shooting lions in Africa. It was shot and inserted to provide production value, and its only effect could be to reduce the story value. Unquestionably most of it will be cut out, for I can not conceive of the Fox people being brainless enough to use it, but why was it shot? Surely the dullest picture person in reading the script must have arrived at the conclusion that the New York sequence struck a jarring note. If such dull person had made the discovery and impressed the importance of it on Winnie Sheehan, or whoever was responsible for the production, many thousands of dollars would have been saved and the picture would have run no risk of being spoiled. Production value can come only from something that increases the story value. Some silly little picture may be helped by a fashion show, or something of the sort, but to add extraneous sequences to bolster such a tremendous drama as Grandma Bernle is about as futile as painting muscles on the biceps of an elephant to make him look powerful. There is another weakness in this picture that is so absurd that it is laughable. When Jimmie Hall, the son who came to America, joins the American army he is the owner of a small delicatessen shop. While he is in Europe his wife, June Collyer, whose delicate performance I overlooked in distributing credit, apparently builds him a chain of extraordinary eating places run by waitresses who wear ruffles. It is one of the most idiotic things I ever saw in a picture, and I can not believe it will be retained. Again, why was it shot? If Fox has too much money, why not pay Janet Gaynor and Charlie Farrell decent salaries? With inspired direction John Ford has built up one of the greatest pictures ever brought to the screen, and to satisfy someone's taste for vulgar ostentation the closing sequences are made ridiculous by showing the accomplishment of something that could not have been accomplished, and which is totally outside the spirit of the picture if it could be. Producers could save a great deal of money and give us better pictures if they would either understand the scripts or take the advice of people with such understanding.

They Told Him That It Couldn't Be Done

HAT the screen industry is like no other on earth and that ordinary business principles can not be applied to it is believed by those who make pictures.

Any producer can prove to you conclusively that the

adoption of an eight-hour day would ruin the industry. The same arguments were used a score of years ago by shoe manufacturers when their workmen demanded shorter hours. The manufacturers proved conclusively that an eight-hour day would bankrupt them. They admitted that other industries might survive such restrictions on their working hours, but the shoe business was like no other on earth. When railroad workers rebelled at having to work twelve hours a day it was proven beyond the shadow of a doubt that the adoption of shorter hours would have such a ruinous effect that the lives of all travellers would be imperilled. But the fool workers in both industries, with callous indifference to the welfare of their employers, insisted upon shorter hours, and the industries have staggered along pretty well ever since. If the picture industry were controlled by people of ordinary common sense they would cease this idiotic chatter about their business being unlike any other; they would acknowledge that it is exactly like every other industry and would apply to it the conditions that have made the other industries prosperous. The institution of sensible hours is only one of the many things they would do. Dr. Herbert T. Kalmus, president of Technicolor, arrived from the East a couple of months ago resolved to make a few pictures. All the poor fellow was equipped with was a business head, and he had the funny notion that there was nothing mysterious about the screen industry. Of course he realized that he would need the assistance of some people who had had experience in studios, and he secured a supervisor, a scenarist, a director, and a cameraman. He gathered them together and told them that his first two-reeler in color was to cost just so much, that Agnes Ayres and Otto Mathieson were to play the leads, that five days were to be spent in shooting. The staff liked the doctor, and in a kindly way put him straight. The salaries that Miss Ayres and Mathieson would demand would make it impossible to keep within the budget, and a color picture could not be shot in five days. The members of the staff proved these things to this business man, making out a conclusive case that any producer would have approved. But in spite of all the good advice the foolish fellow went ahead. The picture was shot in five days and the cost was below estimate. I saw it the other day and admired the performances of Agnes Ayres and Mathieson. Lady of Victories it is called and it is one of the most exquisite things I ever saw on the screen. It is a brief story of Napoleon and Josephine, and the high degree of perfection reached by Technicolor brought out the gorgeous coloring of the period in a succession of scenes sublimely beautiful. But the picture is not all color. It is dramatic and human. R. William Neill directed with a fine sense of the values of the story. Miss Ayres gives a splendid performance, revealing dramatic powers that I did not know she possessed. Mathieson makes an adequate Napoleon, investing the part with dignity and feeling. I thought of this brilliant example of the progress of screen art while I was viewing the poor example of color photography which was included in the opening program of the United Artists theatre. It occurred to me that when such an imposing theatre was using a color film it should have been a little more particular in its selection. The Lady of Victories is a picture that would dignify any program of which it was a part.

Laura La Plante in Another Good One

AURA La Plante can wrinkle her provoking nose and smile, and hold a scene as long as she wants to. I don't recall that I ever have seen her on the screen for as long as one second in which she was not interesting. When I watch her in one of those delightful nothings in which Universal presents her to us, I sometimes wonder if we do not underrate her claim to be recognized as something more than an entertaining comedienne. Doesn't it take as much art to wrinkle your nose and make an audience laugh as it does to murder your betrayer and make an audience shiver? I believe it does, but we rate the nose-wrinkler as merely as amusing person, while we consider the murderess a great artist. When you have an opportunity to see Laura's latest, Finders Keepers, study her performance and decide if you can agree with me that she really is a great artist. There scarcely is any story to it, and some of the sequences are downright silly, but if there is a spot in the whole thing that is not entertaining I failed to notice it. I don't think anyone enjoys good screen comedy more than I do, but I seldom laugh out loud at it. But I laughed out loud a dozen times while viewing Finders Keepers. Most of the things I laughed at were not funny in themselves, but the art of Laura La Plante made them highly so. She dresses in a soldier's uniform and has a terrible time checking the disposition of the trousers to lower themselves and her dignity-old stuff, which, in essence, is vulgar. In this picture, owing solely to Laura's cleverness, it is refined comedy that convulsed the large preview audience. She has an inate quality that robs everything she does of any suggestion of coarseness. In all her acting obviousness meets subtility at just the right point, which gives her appeal a wide mental range. She is the finest cryer we have on the screen. Not even Louise Fazenda can make tears quite so funny. But Laura is not the whole thing in Finders Keepers—not by a long shot. Johnny Harron is a large part of it, and further strengthens his reputation as an excellent actor. Some of his close-ups are superb, and at all times he gets laughs without any straining to produce them. In this picture I meet for the first time one Jack Oakey. If it were not such an atrocious pun I would say that he is O. K. He has nothing whatever to do with what story there is, but he is husky and so packed with personality that he is a perpetual joy. His performance should interest students of the screen. As I have said, there is no story excuse for his appearance, and he does nothing that I could describe and make you think is funny-in fact, I can't recall at this moment anything he did-but he is one of the outstanding delights of the picture. I don't know anything about him, but if Universal has him it should hang on to him and give him a chance. Wesley Ruggles directed Finders Keepers. He has a knack for light comedy that makes all his pictures entertaining, but even in some of his straight comedy scenes he reveals a quality that indicates that he could handle admirably a story of feeling and tenderness. I commend the suggestion to Carl Laemmle. Joseph F. Poland supervised the picture and Tom Reed wrote the titles. Nobody punctuated them. But they are good titles. Tom has a sense of humor above the wisecracking standard. In this picture there is an excuse for humor in the titles, but he does not take advantage of it to demonstrate how excruciatingly funny he can be. He makes us laugh, but he does not make us forget the picture. Nor does he commit that master crime of title writers: making characters with serious expressions on their faces say funny things to other characters who listen to them just as seriously. When a character says something funny those whom he addresses should laugh. But it is not done.

"Chicago" Is Great Screen Entertainment

OXIE HART has come to the screen. De Mille has made Chicago, and it is practically a flawless motion picture. Phyllis Haver plays Roxie, and under the capable direction of Frank Urson gives a performance of great merit. It is not an easy part to play. Roxie is a brainless, immoral and vain creature who does not commit one act during the entire unfoldment of the screen story that would earn for her the sympathy of the audience. Yet she is the main character, the one around whom the story revolves. If an author had submitted Chicago as an original screen story the De Mille people—and all the others in every studio—would have pointed out to him what an insane ass he would have been to suggest that a picture could be made from such a story. You cannot make a heroine out of a wanton; you must have a love story, and the public will not stand for an unhappy ending, are only a few of the weaknesses that the author would have been told made his story an impossible one for the screen. Chicago is lacking in all the essentials that producers can prove to you a picture must have to be a box-office success, but I miss my guess if it does not prove to be one of the best money-makers that De Mille ever has turned out. It not only is an engrossing film, but it is a splendid example of screen craftsmanship. A great deal of the credit for it is due C. B. himself, although he takes no direct credit on the screen. He took a lively interest in the production from the first and all through it are evidences of his influence. Such a meritorious picture is poor fodder for a reviewer. My reviews grow fat on comments on such faults as I can detect, and here is a picture without any. In story, acting, directing, and production it is all that could be desired. I did not see the play, but can not imagine that it is as good as the picture. Phyllis Haver shows in Chicago that all the nice things I have said of her in The Spectator are justified. She gives a magnificent performance, one that should gain her recognition as one of our few real actresses. Her acting in the sequence in which she kills her lover is really notable. Her part is full of rapid transitions and in every phase of it she is superb. Robert Edeson contributes what I believe will be considered his finest screen performance. His address to the jury is a masterly bit of acting. As the district attorney Warner Richmond is convincing. He reveals a fine understanding of the part and proves himself to be worthy of better parts than generally fall to his lot. Victor Varconi, as Roxie's husband, gives the truly artistic characterization that we have learned to expect from him. Virginia Bradford is coming along. She makes a sweet and appealing slavey, and strengthens my conviction that she is going to be heard from. T. Roy Barnes performs the remarkable feat of looking like a newspaperman and acting like one. His is one of the best performances in the

picture, but I am sorry that someone had the idea that a toothpick sticking from his mouth all the time helped to characterize him. When we study an actor's face to get his mental reaction to a situation we are not helped any when our attention is attracted to a toothpick. Frank Urson's direction of the court room scenes was splendid. Not a detail was overlooked and literally dozens of little touches make the trial most convincing. Chicago is a powerful arraignment of publicity madness, and the picture developes the theme in a manner that reflects the utmost credit on all those who had anything to do with it. The closing scenes are particularly effective, especially one showing a newspaper, bearing an account of Roxie's trial, being carried into the sewer. Chicago is a very fine picture and to all the exhibitors who read The Spectator I recommend it without reservation.

English Picture That Is Not Convincing

ADEMOISELLE from Armentieres is a picture that England sends to us. Metro is to release it and had the job of editing and titling it for the American market. It arrived at Culver City in twelve reels and leaves in seven. Never in the history of the screen will a wholly satisfactory seven-reel picture be made from one of twelve. Armentieres shows the marks of the shears, and I believe it loses some of its conviction on account of the strictly American titles that Metro substituted for the English ones. Pictorially the production obviously was made abroad; it deals solely with European soldiers, and there is not a suggestion of the United States about it, yet its titles are full of strictly American slang. I'll grant that the original titles had to be made over, for undoubtedly they consisted largely of English slang and expressions that would make strange reading over here, but in translating them I believe their foreign flavor should have been retained to make them consistent with the whole atmosphere of the picture. So much for the Americanization of the production. Any picture made abroad is of interest to Hollywood. Looking at this one through Hollywood eyes we find much in it to criticize unfavorably, but our criticism must be tempered with the realization that it was made primarily for the British market, and if it pleases British audiences it performs its first duty. To me the picture looks crude. It contains most of the faults that we are outgrowing. We are making our characterizations more reasonable and are etching them with finer strokes. The English, if we may judge from this picture, still use the bold strokes that make for insincerity. The male lead in Armentieres sees his French sweetheart enter the house of a neighbor, and from there until near the end of the picture acts as if his world had come to an end. There was nothing in the incident of the girl's visit to warrant the hero's reaction to it, consequently his entire characterization following it is unconvincing. The girl also is made to act in an unreasonable way for the second half of the picture. An effort is made to gain sympathy for her when she endeavors to locate her sweetheart when the soldiers leave for the front. The business is a direct steal from King Vidor's treatment of Renee Adoree's pathetic attempt to find Jack Gilbert in The Big Parade, but it is lacking entirely in the great human appeal of the Vidor scene. The girl follows the British troops until she enters a German trench, which is too much to ask us to believe. It is poor motion picture stuff because it is a ridiculous thing for her to do, even if it were possible for her to do it. The characterizations of the heavy, a German spy, is another crudity. He is a style of heavy that we are growing away from, one so obviously a villain that the French would have shot him on general principles. The picture makes its obeisance to our obsession for rough-and-tumble fights. When the spy is cornered a British soldier, instead of beating the spy's brains out with the butt of his rifle, throws the rifle at him and then starts to beat him up. But the picture is not devoid of entertainment value. To offset its crudities there are several good touches, and the war sequences, which make generous use of stock shots, are at all times interesting and sometimes dramatic. If the picture is offered to exhibitors at a reasonable price they will not go far astray if they buy it. Its greatest weakness, of course, is that it has no American favorites in the cast. That will have to be taken into account.

"The Noose" Is Directed Well

VEN when I saw him in terrible pictures my respect for Dick Barthelmess as an actor never wavered. He has played some silly and purposeless parts, but always he played them with a charm and skill that showed that the quality of his acting which had made him a favorite had suffered none under the blight of inconsequential stories. At this writing I have not seen The Patent Leather Kid, but I have seen The Noose, and it demonstrates that my confidence in Dick was not misplaced. As the young bootlegger who prefers to go to the gallows rather than reveal that he is the son of the governor's wife, Barthelmess gives one of the best performances of his career. He is truly splendid in scenes with his mother, Alice Joyce, who is unaware that the pathetic, but stubborn, boy whose life is to be snuffed out because he killed the man who betrayed her, is her son. These scenes are powerful, dramatic and human, beautifully directed, beautifully composed and beautifully acted. John Francis Dillon directed. I am not a screen encyclopedia, but I believe that I would know of it if Dillon ever before gave us such a fine picture as this one. In places his direction is inspired, and at all times it is intelligent and strikingly in keeping with the moods of the different scenes. Even though he did not get as far away from close-ups as I would like to have seen, Dillon showed great discernment in their use and avoidance. Barthelmess is sentenced to be hanged we see his full figure in a medium shot, which gives him an opportunity to register his reaction with his whole body, exactly what I have been pleading for so persistently in The Spectator. Again in a scene in the governor's library Dillon demonstrates the value of the treatment that I have been advocating. In it are Barthelmess, Alice Joyce, his mother and now the wife of the governor, who is present also, as well as the warden of the jail and Dick's attorney. Alice does not know that Dick is her son, nor does her husband. Dick is the only one who knows it, and he is a tremendously appealing, pathetic youth on his way to the gallows. It will be numbered among the great sequences of the new year. Although it is acted magnificently I am convinced that it derives most of its power from the treatment Dillon has

given it. For nearly its entire length we have the son, the mother, and the mother's husband on the screen before us all the time. Occasionally the governor moves out of the scene, leaving us the son and mother and now and then there are individual close-ups, but not enough to allow us to forget that the drama involves the three characters, and is not confined to one of them. I have contended, so often that I am afraid I bore some of my readers, that close-ups rob scenes of most of their drama, and it is with a devilish sort of satisfaction that I see Dillon prove my contention. Almost any other director would have given us this sequence in a series of close-ups, with the camera hopping around from one huge facial expression to another, and while we would have got from it all the story value in it, it never would have made us reach for our handkerchiefs, and cough, and pretend that specks of dust had got into our eyes. When the mother and son faced one another in a medium shot, which included also the figure of the governor, who was the reason the boy could not reveal himself to his mother-when we saw all three together on the screen we were looking at a motion picture, not at huge heads playing hop-skip-and-jump before our eyes. Of course, there are not many directors who can handle more than one character at a time, which is one reason for the close-up evil. When you see dramatic scenes cut into close-ups you can consider them as confessions by their directors that they were not capable of shooting them intelligently.

A Picture That Has Great Appeal

ILLON gives another striking demonstration of the value of the long shot in a scene in a night club. Previously we have seen the same room alive with the bustle of chorus girls and other entertainers passing in and out. We are brought back to it on the date set for Dick's execution. It is shown in a long shot which takes in the whole room. The center is clear of characters, the girls being shown either sitting or standing near the three walls that we can see. There is no movement except in the fingers of a man who sits at a piano, playing idly. Coming on the heels of scenes of those concerned directly with the drama, this shot, with its lack of action, its static, disconsolate, but gaily attired girls, is extremely impressive, and reflects highly intelligent direction. Lina Basquette, in love with Barthelmess, returns from bidding him good-bye in prison. She enters the scene slowly and sinks to a chair. Corliss Palmer, who has done a fine bit previously in the picture, moves forward to console Linaand the spell of the scene, which depends upon its entire composition for its impressiveness, is broken by a close-up of the two girls. I regretted that close-up, for which there was no excuse. Still more did I regret another such closeup on which the scene faded out. Our last memory of the room should have included all those who contributed to its drama. Lina's visit to Dick in prison reveals more fine direction. They converse through the bars of the cell, and except for a few feet Lina's back is to the camera for the entire scene, and she registers with her back, hands and arms the tragedy of what they think is their final parting. We see her face only when she speaks a title, an unnecessary change in the position of the camera, as the wording of the title shows that it is spoken by her. The dictum that we must see the face of a character speaking a title is one of the many absurd traditions of the screen, an art that should not be limited in its expression by rules, traditions or habit. I saw The Noose before it had received its final paring, but even as I saw it, it was an extraordinarily good picture that any exhibitor anywhere should be glad to book. But when it is released it will be still better than it was at its first showing. One of the cuts that undoubtedly will be made raises a question that it would profit picture people to consider. How far can suspense be carried before it backfires? As in the case of every feature that enters into the composition of a picture, suspense is treated mechanically, instead of intellectually. In The Noose we have Dick's death march from his cell to the gallows. It is slow, impressive, splendidly directed, and beautifully lighted and photographed, and still is the one really weak spot in the picture. It asks the audience to go farther than it will. Before the reprieve, which the audience knows is inevitable, takes Barthelmess out of his danger, the picture goes so far as to show him with the rope around his neck, a scene presented effectively by shadows. The suspense was overdone, as it is overdone in a great many pictures that are produced by factory methods. Second in importance to Dick's contribution to it is the beautiful performance of Alice Joyce. Never before did she move me as she did in this picture. Montague Love is a heavy so menacing as to be the one jarring note in the characterizations. It is not his fault, of course, for he acts his part splendidly, but it is a mistake to present him in a picture of this sort as an old-fashioned, dime novel villain. Lina Basquette does same really fine dramatic work. It is first time I have seen her. She's all right. While all the acting is very good, the picture itself is greater than any of the performances. It is the best thing that has come out of Burbank, and to Henry Hobart, supervisor, and Al Rockett, production executive or whatever he is called, goes a lot of credit. But most of all, of course, to John Francis Dillon who has done a notable

Harry Rapf Asks Us To Believe Too Much

OR years Harry Rapf has had the idea that he would like to make dog pictures. At one time he felt so desperate about it that he engaged me to write a story with a shepherd dog star. I wrote two, which he told me were very dreadful indeed. I gave my dogs things to do that dogs could do, and wrote my stories with a view to the tastes of dog lovers. At that time Harry was not sure just what he wanted. The only point upon which he was positive was that he did not want my stories. Recently I have seen a picture which must be Harry's idea of what a dog picture should be. He may have produced others in the meantime, but this is the only one that I have seen. It rejoices in the resounding name of Under the Black Eagle and was directed by W. S. Van Dyke. Metro has given it a satisfactory production, and it has as a background the World War. The dog star is Flash, a magnificent shepherd with a distinct personality. In fact he is the only shepherd that ever appealed to me as a screen star, as it is a breed for which I do not care a great deal. Flash is a beautiful animal, with a greater range of facial expression than is usual even in well bred dogs.

He looks extraordinarily intelligent and has great appeal. In pictures written, directed, and supervised by people who understand dogs and know why we love them and they love us, he could become a great favorite with the public. Black Eagle is lacking in these essentials to success. One thing that the public will not stand for is abuse of babies or dumb animals on the screen. All through this picture Flash is abused. He is whipped, his feet are cut by broken glass until he is lamed, he is separated from his master, and is shot. For nine-tenths of the picture he is unhappy, which is a fatal defect in a dog film. It is incomprehensible to me how Metro could turn out such a job. It sounds paradoxical, but the only thing that saves the picture is that it is not convincing, although Van Dyke's direction is good. If one could believe that the dog really was suffering all the torture depicted, the picture would be intolerable. The opening sequences show the existence of a blood feud between Flash and the heavy. Besides being wrong psychology, it is poor story construction as it ties up with nothing. The heavy and the dog come together during the war, but the dog shows none of the hate developed early in the picture. Why was it developed? Surely not solely for the purpose of showing us a dog being thrashed. There is nothing in the second half of the picture to tie up with the action in the first half. There is no excuse for the dog being wounded in the war sequences. And the story has other weaknesses. A hard-pressed unit attaches to the collar of a dog a plea for succor. On the way to headquarters the dog is killed. Flash happens along, chews off the collar and delivers the message. To realize how preposterous this scene is all you need do is to reflect that the dog does something that no human on earth could do. To duplicate the feat a soldier would have to discover the dead body of another soldier whom he never had seen and about whom he knew absolutely nothing, find on him a cunningly concealed message with no address on it, and without reading the message or knowing what it was about, or knowing where it came from, deliver it to its proper destination somewhere in Europe. That is what we are asked to believe that Flash could do. And it is only one of the equally preposterous things that the dog does. You will get a further idea of how silly the whole thing is from an earlier scene when this super-dog can not trace a regiment of soldiers along a road. He follows them to a fork in the road, then takes the wrong turn. But, in spite of everything, I would advise exhibitors to book this picture. Their patrons are so hungry for dog pictures that even Black Eagle will entertain them. And it helps me to realize why Harry did not like my dog stories. But, at that, he's a damned decent chap.

Here Is One Killed By Ignorant Editing

HESE are the strong points of Man, Woman, and Sin: a script that was written almost perfectly; highly intelligent direction by Monta Bell; the story a gripping one and told without any lost motion; very good acting by John Gilbert, Jeanne Eagels, Gladys Brockwell and Marc McDermott; an adequate production. What else does a picture need to make it an outstanding box-office success? At first glance we would seem to have all the ingredients required to make a production notable. Yet Man, Woman, and Sin is not a notable picture. It is just

an ordinary program picture, over which the critics and the public are not enthusing. It lacks the one ingredient that I have not listed: intelligent editing. In one sequence McDermott calls at the apartment that he maintains for his mistress, and finds the mistress in Gilbert's arms. There is an altercation in which McDermott is killed. There you have drama which it should not be difficut to make gripping on the screen. But as we see it, it is not gripping, and it is not quite clear just what is going on. Instead of the men confronting one another, the employer and the employee quarreling over the former's mistress, who is present also, all we see of the three parties to the dramatic scene are their heads, looking daggers at, or saying scathing things to, nothing whatever. I have been saying a lot of late about the stupid use of close-ups, and when you see this Metro picture you will know what I mean. The fact that it created not a ripple of enthusiasm although it had everything that a picture need have, may be ascribed solely to the fact that it was edited to death. What other reason could there be? I have credited Monta Bell with highly intelligent direction, but if he were responsible for the profusion of idiotic close-ups, then I withdraw my commendation. As presented to the public, Man, Woman, and Sin reflects the workmanship of people who have no right to be on any studio pay-roll. They are what is the matter with pictures. They do not understand what it is all about. A sequence such as I have referred to is gripping because it shows two men contending for a woman. All three people are necessary to it, and I am assuming that Bell shot it as a whole before shooting it over again entirely in close-ups, which places the blame for the picture's lack

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of appeal on the editing. But I may be doing Bell too much credit. The sequence is one that would require considerable skill by a director to shoot it as it should be shot, and it may be that Bell realized that he was unequal to it, as a consequence falling back on the incapable director's last resort-close-ups. It takes no brains whatever to direct close-ups, and when you see them scattered all through pictures you can depend upon it that the productions were directed by people who probably would have made very good coal shovelers. Exhibitors need not be afraid of Man, Woman, and Sin. It contains one of the best performances that Gilbert ever gave, and Jeanne Eagels is attractive and effective. The newspaper atmosphere is maintained faithfully, and the whole thing is interesting. If it had been edited properly it would have been a vastly better picture.

SEAT between my son and daughter, both of whom A are in high school, was not the best possible position from which to obtain an unbiased opinion of The High School Hero, a Fox picture which marked Dave Butler's debut as a director. Both Mary and Donald giggled, laughed, or delightedly poked me in the ribs during the entire showing, making it impossible for me not to enjoy it, even if I would not have done so without being subjected to such contagion. It is a delightful little picture that any exhibitor should be glad to get. Anyone whom it will not please is quite beyond pleasing. It will charm young people, and charm still more the older ones, who, I believe, derive more genuine enjoyment from youngsters on the screen than do their sons and daughters. Sally Phipps, Nick Stuart, John Darrow and David Rollins are highly entertaining. There is not much story, the feature of the production being its fine, healthy atmosphere. Butler directed with a fine sense of fitness. There is nothing about the picture to indicate that it is the director's first effort. In fact there are a couple of shots which would indicate that one of our old and experienced directors was in charge. The coach of the basketball team, in addressing his men, stands with his back to them in order to face the camera. Perhaps Dave directed the scenes that way to delude us into thinking that he is an old director, for no new one with any original ideas to contribute to the screen would do such a fool thing as to have a coach stand with his back to his squad when urging them to go out and do their damnedest. Another particularly stupid piece of direction is of a scene showing the enthusiastic students cheering Brandon Hurst, whose performance is one of the best things in the picture. He faces the camera, and the students line up behind him, also facing it, exactly as Kiwanians do in news-reels. Butler is not going to get very far as a director if he groups his characters with his only thought for the camera and none for common sense.

SKINNER, who by now probably has had a succession of dress suits, has come back to the screen with a big idea and again in the person of Bryant Washburn. Skinner's Big Idea was made by F. B. O. from a story by Henry Irving Dodge. It is a nice little audience picture that should go well in houses looking for clean entertainment for family trade. It has a love interest played acceptably by Martha Sleeper and Hugh Trevor. The latter is a young man with an agreeable screen personality and considerable acting ability. The major interest of the

story is the affairs of three old men played by William Orlamond, James Bradbury and Charles Dudley. Orlamond has most to do and gives a splendid performance. Despite the fact that producers contend that audiences are not interested in old people I have argued constantly to the contrary and have maintained that there is no better screen material than stories which have old men and women involved in the affairs of young people. The three delightful old men in Skinner's Big Idea make the picture. With this production Lynn Shores makes his bow as a director. It is difficult to judge of his ability as most of the story is told with close-ups, a method that makes no demand on the skill of a director. If we ever are to have a new note in direction it must come from the young fellows who are making their debuts, and the first thing I would advise them to do is to regard close-ups as only the last recourse of an unimaginative brain. If Shores can tell his stories only in close-ups his advent as a director adds one more to our already long list of incompetent ones, but as I see in Skinner's Big Idea evidences of intelligent direction I have no fear for his future if he can learn to regard the close-up as the curse that it is.

THE Los Angeles Times is going at its Second Annual Hold-Up Number quite systematically. During the past year a card index was maintained to show how many times each screen person was mentioned in the Pre-View, and the size of the ad that a given person should take in the Hold-Up Number is determined by the number of times he was mentioned during the year. To those who are slow in coming through the records are shown as a reason why they should buy space. When this fails, the exquisite

The Symphony

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agony that Ed Schallert and Grace Kingsley will suffer if the intended victims refuse to be victims is advanced as an argument. As a final resort threats are used. I have the word of several actors, actresses and agents that Times salesmen have threatened them with exclusion from Times columns unless they buy space in the Hold-Up Number. The lamentable thing about it is that a lot of cowardly fools among the screen people fall for the graft. When the number comes out I am quite sure that there will appear in it the advertisements of a lot of people who claimed to be too poor to join in the plan to give The Spectator a large exhibitor circulation, thereby making it a more powerful champion of screen workers. These advertisers are afraid of The Times, therefore spend money with it to influence its editorial utterances. They do not spend money with The Spectator for they think that no matter how much the sum was it could not influence anything I write. In this they are right. When I can not maintain The Spectator ethically I won't graft. I'll kill it. Those for whom I fight may spend their money in the Hold-Up Number without worrying about me. It won't effect my treatment of the silly asses.

COUPLE of weeks ago Al Jolson and Will Rogers participated in some radio broadcasting that, it is estimated, was heard by forty million people. Each of them seemingly tried to outdo the other in presenting screen artists to the radio public in the most unfavorable light. Jolson, lacking the kind of mind from which wit comes spontaneously, became positively vulgar and related coarse stories, that all screen people should resent. I understand that he is coming to Hollywood to make another picture. When he gets here those who do not feel that fame and fortune excuse a man's lack of a sense of decency should let him know that the homes of picture people are not open to vulgar lowbrows who think it clever to use screen actresses as victims of their blunted wit. If Hollywood receives Jolson with open arms it will amount to an endorsement of the insult to which he which he subjected two of its prominent artists. Will Rogers' statement that picture people are starting the year with new wives is a pitiful attempt at wit and it bears out what his recent writings indicate: that he is growing stale. I am at a loss to account for his extraordinary statement to all America that no flowers grow in California at this time of the year. His own garden bears ample evidence of the fact that it was a nutty thing to say.

WHEN are motion picture executives going to grow up? As a body they have a great capacity for making asses of themselves. Next month Joseph P. Kennedy will have been two years in pictures as president of F.B.O., and I see in an advertisement that "During February the entire motion picture industry will celebrate Mr. Kennedy's second anniversary." No other industry would resort to such blatant asininity. And by the way, The Spectator's second birthday will come with its second issue in March. I shall expect the entire motion picture industry to celebrate it. Hollywood should be decorated and I should be presented with an expression of the industry's gratification that it has such a paper to read. As I do not wish the celebration to fail to click through lack of organization, I hereby appoint Louis B. Mayer chairman of the

An Open Letter . . . and How!! A GROWING BUSINESS WITH A BIG POLICY

The Motion Picture Industry is OUR industry, and we are happy and proud that we are identified with a business which wields such a powerful influence in the lives of the people. We acknowledge our responsibilities not only to the public but to the producers and artists as well. We believe as do the courts that a man can not serve two masters and that loyalty and integrity on the part of a trusted employee should be insisted upon both by those from within and without any organization.

From time to time graft and dishonesty have crept into the very bowels of the Motion Picture Industry. Invariably where this condition prevails, havoc is wrought. We are opposed to these things, and at no time during the existence of this office have we been a party to anything but honest, upright and legitimate dealings. We have never paid unjust tribute to any individual nor will we ever. Our principle of service is based upon the merit of our product and our desire to negotiate in fairness both to purchaser and seller.

When you hear of our office selling an actor, a director, a writer, or a story, you may rest assured that the transaction was a legitimate one and that merit and value were exchanged for a certain recompense, all of which arrived at its honest destination, and that the transaction was made without subterfuge or "splits".

If you believe in a doctrine of this kind and are honestly and sincerely in love with the business of which you are a part, and you want to see it stabilized and placed on a sound foundation, you will then endorse this policy and give this office the privilege and opportunity of serving you.

This is not an original thought or business idea. We are imitating something that has proven itself in all the biggest lines of merchandising in America. And we wish to say that we have no copyright on this policy and that any other representative or anyone in any branch of this business is absolutely free to adopt this policy. In doing so they may or may not do more business, but they will certainly sleep better at night.

Our telephone number is GLadstone 1123, and our organization consists of people who believe in the Motion Picture Industry and are considering its future. We have chosen this work regardless of the fact that we are capable of doing something else.

We will sink or swim on this policy, and we firmly believe that your co-operation will enable

us to swim.

committee on decorations, and Winnie Sheehan chairman of the committee on presentation of address.

A T THE opening of the United Artists theatre, Jack Barrymore stated in his graceful speech that Joe Schenck and his associates were engaged in "placing a brilliant necklace of beautiful houses around the somewhat dusty throat of the United States." As there was not a snicker from the audience it gives me pleasure to make the quotation in order that Jack will know that I got the "somewhat dusty", even though that is not the reason for the present comment. I hope, as the houses grow and the architecture of all the foreign countries and periods are reflected in them that there will be left at least one that will perpetuate the only distinctive note that America has given architecture. The Colonial style is the only one that we can call our own, and it would be a graceful act for the United Artists to recognize the fact.

A LL those who are looking for an evening of delightful entertainment should head downtown and drop in on Hit the Deck at the Majestic. Lillian Albertson has given the New York success an elaborate production and has gathered a cast of capable artists. Kathryn Crawford is very much in evidence. She is a talented young woman, good to look upon and with a personality that pleases. May Boley's singing of "Hallelujah" is quite a show in itself, and there are several others who add greatly to the evening's entertainment. There is a lively and well trained chorus that knows how to sing, and the dancing throughout is excellent. I don't have much to say in The Spectator about stage productions, for most of them bore me, but Hit the Deck is an exception. You shouldn't miss it.

THE Spectator gold medal for the best love scene screened during the present year will not be won by a director who breaks his scene into close-ups. Love-making is particularly a two-party affair, and both parties are necessary to it at all times. The spectacle of one person on the screen making love to someone off it is too far removed from my conception of a love scene to give it a place as a contender for the medal. And the medal for the most original fade-out shown during the year will not be won by a director who winds up with a clinch. In fact, it was my desire to get away from that final unimaginative hug that prompted me to offer the second medal.

THE De Mille studio gives us in Chicago a picture notable for its attention to details. In not one shot could I find anything to criticize unfavorably. A picture is made

BARGAIN --- ROLLS ROYCE

Four-passenger open phaeton Rolls Royce. Car in perfect condition and has been run 27,000 miles by original owners, a Pasadena family. Recently thoroughly inspected by Rolls-Royce factory and pronounced in perfect condition.

This machine cost \$21,000 new. Terms can be

This machine cost \$21,000 new. Terms can be arranged to a responsible party, or trade arranged on high class used car. Priced for quick sale, at considerably less than half its original cost.

Correspond with

G. G. MARUGG 136 West Green St., Pasadena, Calif. up of scenes and titles. It would appear to me that it is as important to be as careful to detail in a title as it is in the matter of a policeman's uniform. The punctuation of the titles in Chicago is sloppy. Almost every crime is committed. For the life of me I can't understand why motion picture producers are so persistent in parading illiteracy.

A TITLE in Man, Woman and Sin reads "Who's that woman—" It's a quaint custom they have on the Metro lot, that of not putting interrogation marks where they belong. Apparently they are reluctant to create the impression that there are educated people on the pay-roll.

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Ву

HARRY O. HOYT

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By Donald Beaton — The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

WARNER Brothers is not going output by making pictures like The College Widow. The whole thing was based on an impossible premise, and as that was the case it could hardly be good. The trustees of a college told the president of it that unless their football team beat their rival next year he would lose his job. That is about the silliest thing I've seen on the screen in a long time. Nobody thought of blaming the coach for the constant defeats, yet a subtitle said he had been there year after year. The president's daughter decided to save him by vamping all the stars from other colleges to come and play for her college. I understand that George Ade's play made the hero a coach or something so that there was some probability of his losing his job if his team didn't win. Then there was some sense to the situation and one could really get interested in which way the game went. Dolores Costello was the daughter of the president who went out to lure the players to her college. There was no mistake in casting her for the part, as she could probably lure Louis B. Mayer into buying a Spectator, but her method was wrong. She used the same drowning stunt for each one, and gave each savior a photograph with the same inscription on it. A girl who was as clever as she was supposed to be would have used different methods for each one, so that there would be no danger of any of them suspecting anything.

Miss Costello is very pleasing in her role and demonstrates that she deserves bigger and better things. A good comedy touch could have been inserted by going through all the photographs she had given away and putting in something in every in-scription to show how she had lured that particular victim to her college. There was another silly scene where Dolores rushed over to a dormitory to calm her fractious charges. There the whole team put on a bum amateur show for the purpose of scaring her and teaching her a lesson. That was very silly. She wouldn't have gone to a men's dormitory in the first place. Buster Collier was supposed to be a great football player, but he had been thrown out of several universities for drinking. He never could have gotten to be a good football player if he drank all the time. The football game in The College Widow was very poor, being even more mixed up than the usual run of moving picture football games.

OR a long time I have seen in various magazines that Monta Bell is the cleverest young director we have, and at last he gives us one of the best pictures I have seen in a long time. Bell's direction is clever and sympathetic, and he makes the most of every opportunity. Aided by brilliant performances by the entire cast, he has made a picture which places him high in the list of directors. To my way of thinking, John Gilbert, the star of Man, Woman, and Sin, has not done such a good job of acting since The Big Parade. There were scenes where his acting was far more subtle and clever than any he has done yet. Jeanne Eagels, who was recruited from the speaking stage to play the feminine lead in Man, Woman, and Sin, gave a very good performance except where she let her stage training run away with her. In some of her dramatic scenes, she apparently was trying to put them over in the stage manner, doing more acting with her voice than anything else. Gladys Brockwell gave a performance which equalled her wonderful work in Seventh Heaven. Marc McDermott was good as the heavy.
P. S.—Monta Bell used far too

many close-ups.

SILK Stockings establishes the fact that Laura La Plante is rapidly becoming one of the cleverest comediennes on the screen. Outside of her work there wasn't much to the picture. The story was decidedly frail, and there were times when the picture verged on slapstick; but on the whole it was quite enjoyable. Laura La Plante and Bebe Daniels are an interesting comparison. They are both about on a par as to acting ability, although Bebe has had no chance to show her acting powers at all lately. Their respective studios can and do supply them with fine supporting casts and production. Yet Laura La Plante's pictures are good and Bebe Daniels's are bad. The answer lies in the fact that Laura La Plante's pictures are thought of seriously and made with some care by Universal, while Famous Players is so wrapped up in its great epics and super-specials that the Daniels pictures are done carelessly. They are thrown out, poorly done, to cash in on Bebe They are thrown Daniels's box-office value so that the organization can have more money to waste on so-called "epics". That policy is all right now, but in a little while, when the public is sick of seeing poor pictures, Famous is going to be out of luck. This business of making epics is pure speculation. With less costly pictures, it is not so dangerous, as almost any small picture put out by a big studio will pay. There are usually enough people who go just to see a moving picture regardless of whether or not it is good or bad, to make a moderately priced film pay. With "epics", however, which, according to motion picture rules and regulations, must cost a tremendous sum, the chances are all with the picture's losing money.

To get back to Silk Stockings again, however, the whole story was based on something which was not likely to happen. A grown woman who did not realize the trouble she might cause by putting a pair of silk stockings in a married man's coat pocket would hardly have been allowed at large. Her next playful little prank would probably be putting arsenic in the soup. However, the picture was amusing, and that's all it was made for.

SKINNER'S Big Idea, produced by F. B. O. and directed by Lynn Shores, is something rather new in screen entertainment. The story concerns three old men, which theme is not supposed to draw in moving pictures. In this, however, the affairs of the three old men were just as engrossing as any romance with a bunch of young principals.

The story is one of the famous Skinner series by Henry Irving Dodge. I suppose it has been adapted to the screen well. Never having read that particular book of the Skinner series, I can't judge accurately. However, the plot was the rather old one of old men turned into young ones by a conspiracy among younger friends. That type of story always appeals to me for some reason. Also, business was the background of the story. That brings the picture closer to thousands of men who will see it. No matter whether or not their business is the same, the problems presented to the characters in the story will be the same problems submitted to them day after day. Skinner's Big Idea is Shores's first directorial attempt, and, except for some of the traditional mistakes made by practically every director of every picture for the last few years, his direction is good. His characterizations are done a bit crudely, but he at least doesn't make every character react to something the same way. That is going a step farther than the majority of older directors.

As I have said, the story of Skinner's Big Idea centered around three old men. The parts were very capably filled by James Bradbury, who made such a hit as "The Knitting Swede" in The Blood Ship; Edward Dudley, whom I don't remember having seen before; and William Orlamond, who is vaguely familiar, but if I'm not mistaken, this is his first big part. Although pictures about another phase of life are favored for a change, the average motion picture fan likes to see a representation of himself or someone he knows on the screen as steady diet. That is why these three old men will be popular. There are thousands just

like them all over the United States. The only thing about them I didn't like was the fact that they had been in the same office for years, yet when they began to spruce themselves up, they got in the habit of throwing their arms around each other at the slightest provocation. They also walked around the golf course arm in arm. That looked silly, and detracted somewhat from the sympathy I had felt for them all the way through. When they were like anybody else, I was interested in them, but when they began to do things which weren't true to life, I lost interest.

Bryant Washburn and Ethel Grey Terry as Skinner and "Honey" gave their usual finished performances. The two younger members of the cast, Martha Sleeper and Hugh Trevor who supplied the love interest, were very

satisfactory.

TECHNICOLOR has made another two-reel work of art, The Lady of Victories. The picture deals with Napoleon and Josephine, and is directed by William O'Neill. The pic-ture is well knit and constructed, perhaps the only fault being that there is an attempt to crowd too much action into two reels. The picture starts with Josephine in Martinique, before she ever heard of Bonaparte. It also shows Bonaparte proposing to her. Those two sequences are not very important to the story, and they take precious space. If the picture had started with Napoleon and Josephine married and had gone on from there to his final exile at St. Helena the whole thing would have been smoother. This short film gives an idea of how interesting a whole picture showing Napoleon's life would be. I certainly wish that some man, rich enough not to worry about getting his money back, would buy Ludwig's biography of Napoleon and make a motion picture of Napoleon's life directly from that.

S a work of art, Helen of Troy is perfect. As a motion picture, however, it is very poor. Alexander Korda, the director, has a faculty for making every scene beautiful, and in a picture like this one where there was every opportunity for artistry he was in his element. Little can be said for the rest of the picture. At first it was nothing but a lot of wise cracking titles hung together by a scene here and there. There was an attempt to be funny by inserting modern language and phraseology into the titles. The nearest Helen of Troy came to the method which would have made it a success was in a title where Lewis Stone, who took the acting honors as Menelaos, said he "did not choose" to do something. If the whole picture had been made as a satire on present day conditions, it would have been very funny. Mr. Korda, like most American directors, uses far too many close-ups. When he gets a beautiful set he allows one glimpse of it and then he shoots all the rest of the scene in close-ups, thereby wasting the entire beauty of the set. However, Mr. Korda has one very good trait. Although he is a foreigner he doesn't use his nationality as an excuse for a lot of silly trick shots. If he ever gets the kind of picture that suits him, he will make a tremendous

ARIA Corda, who had the title role in Helen of Troy, is one of the most interesting foreign actresses we have seen yet. She has a very fine screen personality, and while her acting is not perfect, she is very satisfactory. In Helen of Troy she has an unsympathetic part, because no matter how lovely a vamp is, she is always disliked by the audience. Miss Corda will be still more interesting in a sympathetic part. Lewis Stone, as the tired business man of Sparta, took the acting honors. Ricardo Cortez was the only member of the cast who appeared to be unaware that he was working in comedy. His performance was too heavy and solemn. George Fawcett does as well as ever as the old door keeper. Alice White does what little she has to do in her usual clever manner.

THERE used to be an old wheeze, "Why is a mouse when it spins?" The modern counterpart of that is "Why is the average two-reel comedy?" In this I am not speaking of the Charlie Chase and Our Gang comedies. There is always something new about them, the Chase comedies pre-dominating. The Chase comedies have a story which is not lost sight of during the shooting of the thing. However, the rest of the comedies being put out these days are just trash. By some mischance I saw one of the worst twice. It had an airplane and Bobby Vernon in it. They were the

entire laugh-getting force, and they failed miserably. I don't think there was a laugh from the audience all through the thing. There is nothing the matter with Bobby Vernon. With a story he might be quite funny; but with a thing like that, he was a total loss. Practically all the comedies now have the same faults.

If the comedies don't improve, I don't see why exhibitors can't cut them out altogether and show a longer news reel with a Felix cartoon or some such thing. That would be far more amusing than watching a lot of silly antics by impossible people. At any theatre, the bulk of the audione arrives of the the according audience arrives after the comedy is over. Some exhibitor brave enough to cut out comedies and defy the tradition that there must be a moronic comedy before each feature picture, is going to make a lot of money.

WHEN is somebody going to make a mystery picture with the action centering around a family in modest circumstances? Taking the screen as a guide, one would imagine that nobody ever was murdered unless he was tremendously wealthy. There must always be a butler to be suspected; and, by the way, butlers on the screen aren't done right. A man who is an old friend and is accustomed to come to the house, enters, hands his hat and coat to the butler, and passes on without a sign of ever having seen the butler before. A man who is a steady visitor to a house would at least get to the point where he could say "Good morning" or something to the butler. Even the most hopeless snob would do that. I'll admit that making a mystery around average people would be hard, but it wouldn't be impossible, and the novelty would contribute to its success.

RAVINGS OF A NEOPHYTE

By JAMES BRANT

FEW weeks since I undertook a A new job, that of writing, and after a short interval, I then, saw myself before the world in black and white for the first time. It was a funny sensation and I did not know whether to laugh or to cry. My position and feelings were somewhat similar to that of the black wench from Georgia who got caught in a black-berry patch, "so embarrassing, oh, my!"

Of the many millions of inhabitants of this country who are able to read and write, exactly one hundred per cent have been, or will be, attacked by the microbe of writing and tens of thousands have been, and will continue to be, sorely afflicted with that dread disease. A very peculiar symptom of one so afflicted is that he wants to write about something that is to him a strange and little known subject.

It is an open game and an open season to everyone, nobody barred. Buy a small stack and play a white one, anyhow, for a start. All in, folks, take a chance on the whirling ball of

writers' fate!

Being the same kind of a fool gambler as the rest of humanity, on this occasion I am going to place a small bet on something I don't know anything about, writing, and see what luck I have telling others what I don't know. Everybody is doing it; no reason why I shouldn't sit in.

Even the eminent Doctor Brisbane, singsong daily philosopher, adviser to The President, prognosticator of the stock market, prophet of real estate, specialist in bodily health, even the eminent Doctor pulls a boner every once in a while writing about something about which he does not know so very much.

We have with us always the petty pryers of the past and in very particular we have the recent instance of Washington.

George Washington, "First in War, First in Peace, First in the Hearts of his Countrymen", gentleman, soldier, statesman, a man of proven honor and established integrity who held fast and stood true for a principle of right.

George Washington, one man without a price, refusing a kingly crown, that "government of the people, by the people, for the people" might go on trial.

To upstanding citizens of worth it makes no difference whether Washingten drank Port or Madeira, one bottle or a dozen bottles. He served his country faithfully, honorably and unselfishly, which overshadows all else.

But now these petty pryers of the past are frothing at the mouth trying to determine whether Washington drank wine or diluted grape juice, and if wine whether it was sour or sweet, a glass, half-bottle or bottle, one meal a day or three meals a day. Little stories by little writers, the kind of stuff that might be expected from one without a God.

We also have the scandal scavengers of the press, panderers and purveyors of mental and moral filth, wholesalers and peddlers of mind narcotics, who seek to cover up by the flimsy pretext that they are selling the public what the public wants. So do the wholesalers and peddlers of cocaine and heroin. These scandal scavengers are masked cheaters whose actuating motive is greed and whose business is the barter of souls for gold.

The bald-headed Caesar, politician, millionaire, warrior, statesman, a brilliant star in candle-lighted Rome, not satisfied with success in all of those lines, had to go and try his hand at writing and he started off by telling the flowing robes of the Pagan Seven Hills that Gaul was divided into three parts. That is all I know or remember of what Julius wrote about his trip north and I never could, and cannot now, see what difference it made whether Gaul was divided into three parts or into four parts, but as long as Antony's friend said it was three parts that ought to be sufficient.

Writers may be divided into three classes: mechanical, skilled, inventive. There are, of necessity, many different grades in each class and there is no reason for an exact line of differentiation between the classes.

Mechanical writers are the routine laborers who do what they are told to do as they are told. They are pick and shovel, hand and feet workers who do not amount to much in the field of progress but who serve their purpose.

Skilled writers are artizans deft with the tools of their trade. Furnished with a thought or an idea or a subject, from a blueprint or of knowledge acquired by practice they turn it into shapely form, smooth it down and polish it off. Ofttimes they are inventive and add a brightening touch of their own and from their ranks at times come inventive writers.

Inventive writers are thinkers, students and observers. They are delvers for ideas and thoughts and that quality of mind that can uncover a deep or a lofty thought will also uncover a suitable form of expression. The

very nature of their calling keeps them outside the money mart and they often lack the sense of trade to get a just return for their work. Handicapped by discouragement and, perchance, at times hard put for this life's necessities they often falter and fail to attain their highest measure of success.

Ring fighters are justly not rated very high in the business, political and social scale. Even so, wisdom gathers profit where it may and from the qualities and the method that won to success for one fighter, king of his class, a wise man can profit something.

Pound against pound, prime against prime, Bob Fitzsimmons topped them all, past or present, and in the ropedoff square could have administered the sleeping punch to any opponent of even weight and even prime.

Bob Fitzsimmons had everything to succeed in his chosen line. He had physique, stamina, courage and a nimble wit, and to those natural and inherent qualities he added by thought and by training judgment, finesse, patience and a most ungodly punch in either hand. And he lived clean for he was still fighting at fifty years of age when other fighters either are bums or are in the discard. It was his method that was most intriguing and like other successful methods its keynote was simplicity. He made and kept himself fit for the crucial time and when the battle was on, his was the method of patience to play and wait for an opening, a willingness and an ability to take punishment to gain that opening, and when it showed, to step in with a knockout punch.

Inventive writers, full-winged or in chrysalis, might well consider those qualities and that method to their very decided advantage. To merely sit tight and wait for something to open never got anything very much for anybody. To play with judgment and finesse and patience to accomplish an end is generalship. Assuming that an inventive writer has the necessary innate and developed qualities to win in his chosen field, thought and training in trade and barter are additionally essential to the attainment of a full and complete success, the coupling of a just financial return with perfection in writing.

Writing for money alone is as dumb work as to write for the sake of writing, and either must be a rotten sort of a job. A writer without purpose and intent must be an uneasy soul riding on a one-way ticket to hell.

An inventive writer who can deliver is a weakling to sell his product for what the traders choose to give him. Far better to soil his lily-white hands digging ditches, the meanwhile cultivating and developing a punch as against the time of an opening, for he holds the high hand and he can force an opening.

The public does not buy magazines to read the advertisements nor does the public buy seats in the theatres to see the name of the director on the

screen or a picture of the principals. The public buys magazines to read the stories that are in them and the public buys seats in the theatres to see stories enacted by the principals.

It is the story that counts.

Without stories magazines would cease to exist and picture play plants and theatres would be so much real estate, depreciated buildings and second-hand material.

Mechanics never made United States Steel, General Electric or the Ford Motor Company. Inventive minds from the top to the bottom of the organizations built them to their present proportions and inventive minds are keeping them there.

Traders and mechanics are not making anything very much out of picture plays and never will. Executives, writers and others with inventive minds will eventually build plays of a quality far above and beyond the present output.

Inventive writers are the first absolute and positive necessity for picture plays of quality. Writers, collectively and in a general sense, furnish the raw material without which there would be no picture plays, no directors and no producers. Inventive writers, wise in their own generation, might well use judgment and finesse to draw an opening and then step in with the punch to win.

Of all those who are necessary and essential to the production of picture plays inventive writers have the best and the most valid claim to big money.

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VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

A LONG TRAIL

Dear Mr. Beaton:

It's a long, long trail we have travelled from the primordial to this year of our Lord, 1928. Of its sorrows and joys we have, perhaps fortunately, no conscious recollection. Nevertheless, they have left their imprint upon us. We have lived and loved, hated and died, experienced joys unbounded and sufferings unspeakable. From vales of contentment, from blood drenched arenas, from civilizations past and present we have come—and here we are, standing upon the threshold of a New Year. What has it in store for us?

Better pictures, for one thing. We realize the limitless scope of accomplishment and will be satisfied with nothing less. We demand drama that rings true to our instinctive understanding, of human reactions. Perhaps we are wiser, but, nevertheless, we are a product of the past. The primal passions of our forebears still surge in our veins; we react to the same stimulus. No doubt we feel more deeply, for all that has occurred down the aeons of time is our heritage, influencing us whether we will or

Because of this influence some have greater ability along certain lines than others. The poet, the musician, the artist—these can create for our enjoyment. But all of us can feel. O, we can feel!—we complex creatures of the past—and we love to feel enjoyable emotions. It is this capacity for feeling that sets us apart from the beasts and imbues us with faith in the future.

When we say that a picture is not true to life we speak authoritively. Not logic but feeling is the best tube of drama. We enjoy a thing or we do not. Emotion has no conscious volition. It is a breath from the past, playing upon the Eolian-strings of the heart, whose gamut ranges from the melody of love to the raucous dissonance of hate. Though it comes from the past it extends beyond into the future, blending with the fantasm of our desires into a vision that beckons us onward to the heights we see. It is a need of our complex civilizationthis emotional pabulum. And a universal need brooks no interference, but sweeps on inexorably to attainment.

This, then, is the equation: There are in Hollywood all the elements necessary to compose satisfying pictures; there is the universal recognition that pictures are not as good as they might be. What is the answer?

GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN.

MR. and MRS. THOMSON

When you write in a derogatory way of the screen masterpiece, Jesse James, there are a few things which I think you overlook. The story of this picture was written by "Frank M. Clifton." This is the pen name of Miss Frances Marion, the world's

greatest scenario writer, who is paid more than \$200,000 a year for her work. She is, incidentally, the wife of Mr. Fred Thomson, the star of Jesse James.

Mr. Fred Thomson is an ordained clergyman of the Christian church. He was at one time the leading athlete of the country. When Reverend Thomson was pastor of the church at Tonopah he was noted as a scholar and student. While he is not yet forty years old, he has been considered as the head of one of the leading educational institutions of his denomination. Mr. Fred Thomson and Mrs. Fred Thomson are educated people. They have a large library in their mansion at Beverly Hills, one of the show places of the country. They frequently consult it and entertain guests who indulge in discussions of the best authors, biblical and otherwise. They are serious-minded people and an honor to the moving picture industry.

To say that a picture made by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Thomson is not intelligent and historically correct is unjust. Jesse James was not made without due thought and research. It was created under the auspices of Mr. J. P. Kennedy of F. B. O., who is a Harvard graduate and was the representative of Mr. Charles Schwab in ship building during the World War. The picture has been directed by Mr. Lloyd Ingraham, who was long a Shakespearean actor and is an intellectual. One of the leading characters in the screen play is a minister of the gospel, as was Jesse James' father.

I am sure you will make these statements in justice to all concerned. Moving pictures owe much to these serious and thoughtful kind of people, and it should be put on record that they are doing a great deal to advance the art of the screen by offerings like Jesse James, which are historical and devoid of all elements of sex and similar vulgarities. I hope Mr. and Mrs. Fred Thomson and Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Ingraham will not be discouraged but will offer us many more worthy offerings of our national life. This will bring the right kind of American people to the theatres showing such pictures. Not forgetting the horse, "Silver King", who has been trained by Mr. Thomson to a degree which is almost human. FRED X. SNOW.

P. S.—I might add that Mr. Thomson is paid \$400,000 a year and a share of the profits, which shows how he is regarded.

A LETTER FROM NEW YORK

Dear Mr. Beaton:

I have just read your November 12 issue, hence this letter. Your purpose is sincere beyond a doubt. Your extremely free spoken method sounds like Upton Sinclair. But your fire and enthusiasm to do something good should not travail the doubtful honor that is a movie critic's.

By no means am I detracting from any statement you make concerning the producers. There, undoubtedly, is the place to start your furious attack. But there are a few things, which, in your fervent desire to help, you over-

look.

To prevent foreign actors from being employed in American studios is, you will admit, restraining trade. Also, the importations made are usually the best screen workers that foreign countries have to offer. So far foreigners have helped elevate the art. I overlook as nonentities the foreigners under contract who never appear. There you can attack your producers!

George Bancroft, to my mind, stands up in ability with any actor today. William Powell, a very great actor, is subjugated by routine roles. Janet Gaynor is the greatest natural actress I know of. Clara Bow (laugh if you will) is a very fine natural actress, and some day will show it despite Elinor Glyn!

Within the last two years these four have risen to prominence. You can make your claim about foreigners stronger if the producers can give no reason for overlooking such talent so long! There are great people in America but the producers won't look for them!

Punctuation, if you will, was originally intended to show people where to pause, how to connect thoughts, how to emphasize, how to know what the writer meant. If those purposes can be accomplished in subtitles by another method, why not use that method?

Vulgarity and Victor McLaglen. Do you remember Winds of Chance? Poetry of a brute spoken to the delicacy of a petite lady. Victor McLaglen to Viola Dana.

The war has brought looser living. Conventions were shot to hell. Sex is free. There are more vagabonds, living on shoestrings and hoping for success in art. Rebellion against the routine job!

But vulgarity has its limits. Who, though, can say what they are?

Will you tell me?

Sincerely, EUGENE CARAL.



(REPRINTED FROM THE SPECTATOR OF NOVEMBER 12, 1927)

To those engaged in the creative branches of screen art

HAVE been doing, and I will continue to do, what little I can to bring about reforms in the motion picture industry that will improve your condition, make you happier in your work, and increase your earning power. I am advocating these reforms because I believe in them, not to make things better for you. But it so happens that my policy and your interests are identical, and as I have no material interest in the outcome of the campaign, you will be the sole beneficiaries of anything that we may accomplish together.

Those whose policies I have been called upon to oppose are making it as difficult as possible for The Spectator to continue to exist. They have promised that they will put it out of business, and as far as I know it is the only one of their promises that they are making a diligent effort to keep.

If on The Spectator's paid subscription list there were the names of five thousand exhibitors, the paper would be able to laugh at any efforts to destroy it. Its voice would be heeded, and it would be a valuable friend to you.

I do not command the money to meet the expense of a campaign to secure five thousand exhibitor subscribers. I see no way of obtaining it.

Will five hundred of you, whose interests are at stake, subscribe to ten copies each that I may send to exhibitors with your compliments? It will cost each of you fifty dollars, which will be an investment in your own welfare.

This proposal to the personnel of the industry is made at the suggestion, and upon the advice, of twenty leading screen people, three of whom brought the idea to me, and the rest of whom gave it their earnest support. The first plan was to make a quiet canvass without publicity, but I preferred this method.

Welford Beaton

Tear the Coupon off and Mail it.

Write your name and address plainly.

WELFORD BEATON, 7213 SUNSET BOULEVARD, HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA

Put my name down and send me a bill for fifty dollars, together with the names of the ten exhibitors who will receive my yearly subscriptions.

SAMUEL BISCHOFF

Produced and Supervised the following productions during 1927

FOR METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER:

THE FLAGG Selling leader for Metro short subject

program this season.—Variety.

THE LAST SCOUT A two-reel subject suitable for any first

run house.—Filmograph. OUR LADY OF VICTORIES One of the most exquisite things I ever

saw on the screen.-Welford Beaton,

The Film Spectator.

FOR GOTHAM PRODUCTIONS:

THE GIRL FROM RIO

This picture is the work of people who know what they are doing.-Motion Pictures Today.

ROSE OF KILDARE

Well done and interesting.—Variety.

BLONDES BY CHOICE

Pleasing picture well constructed.— Filmograph.

THE CHEER LEADER

Compares favorably with the best turned out by the big line companies.— Film Mercury.

FOR INDEPENDENT MARKET:

FANGS OF JUSTICE

Far superior to any dog picture we have ever seen.—Filmograph.

SNARL OF HATE

A dog picture that promises to equal any of Rin Tin Tin efforts.-Variety.

WHERE TRAILS BEGIN

A picture that can teach other producers how dog pictures should be made.— Welford Beaton, The Film Spectator.

THE CROSS BREED

Exceptionally pleasing and satisfactory picture.—Variety.

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Edited by WELFORD BEATON

THE 20 Cents FILM SPECTATOR

Published In Hollywood Every Other Saturday

Vol. 4

Hollywood, California, February 4, 1928

No. 12

Arthur Lake Case has some Comedy Relief

Academy contract a raw deal for free lances

Executives responsible for big waste of money

Inevitable that speaking films will be general

Some silly habits the screen should outgrow

JAZZ SINGER LAST COMMAND FLYING ROMEOS GET YOUR MAN QUALITY STREET WE'RE IN THE AIR

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Representatives

CHARLES LOGUE

FREE LANCE WRITER

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I am reminded by

AL COHN

that occasionally I should mention that he writes screen stories.

PAUL SCHOFIELD

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CHARLES KENYON

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UNIVERSAL

JOHN FARROW

WRITER

WITH PARAMOUNT

Q

THE FILM SPECTATOR

EVERY OTHER SATURDAY

Published by
FILM SPECTATOR, INCORPORATED
Welford Beaton, President and Editor
7213 Sunset Boulevard

HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA

HEMPSTEAD 2801

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He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., FEBRUARY 4, 1928

Arthur Lake Case Has Comedy Relief

EING sole custodian of a joke takes some of the edge off it. It is a relief to tell it. In the last Spectator I told of Universal's treatment of Arthur Lake, and the recital contained the only deliberate lie I have told thus far in this highly moral periodical. I said that Arthur is a minor. He is not, and thereby hangs the tale that from my seat on the sidelines appears to be funny. You may remember that I said that before Universal would allow Arthur to play the name part in Harold Teen for First National it insisted that he sign a five-year prolongation of his present contract which still has eighteen months to run. In addition to that the threat was made that if he did not sign he would be kept in one-reel comedies for the remainder of the term of the contract, and that if he protested and tried to break his contract he would be blacklisted and would be able to get no work in any studio. Arthur has been working for Universal under a contract signed by his mother four and a half years ago when he was seventeen years old, her signature being necessary because he was a minor. The fact that he has aged at least a trifle in the four and a half years was overlooked by the Universal officials. When the Harold Teen matter came up Mrs. Lake was sent for and her signature to the new contract demanded as the price of Universal's consent to Arthur playing the part he coveted and which with intelligent direction should make him one of the outstanding comedians of the screen. Mrs. Lake was on the point of telling Universal that Arthur was of age and that she no longer had any power to sign a contract for him, but before she got around to it the threats came forth. She decided that that was not the way a woman should be treated, and that it might be a good idea to see which party to the controversy could out-think the other. She was told that her word that she would sign the new contract was all that was desired, and that as soon as she made the promise Universal would sign a contract with First National. Arthur was not called on and was not put in the position of promising anything. Mrs. Lake hemmed and hawed for several days as she was getting too much fun out of it to end it quickly, and finally pledged her word that she would sign the new contract. Universal kept its word. As soon as it received her promise it signed contracts with First National, and Arthur is now working in Harold Teen. After another week of holding off, Mrs. Lake informed Universal that she was ready to sign the new contract, but that she did not know what good it would do, for Arthur, being of age, could not be bound by any contract that he did not sign himself. I do not know what happened on the Universal lot, but I imagine there was the devil to pay. The last Spectator appeared while the comedy still was being enacted, and I could not tell all the truth about it without interfering with the smoothness of its movement, and as the scenes were rehearsed in my library each night I had an artistic interest in the perfection of the performance. Under the circumstances I hope my readers will pardon my lie on the grounds that the offense was committed in a worthy cause. People working in pictures are not going to feel secure, nor will they have peace of mind, until the vicious habit of making them sign contracts under compulsion has been eradicated. When Mrs. Lake came to me when the matter first came up I advised the course she subsequently followed. I have nothing against Universal. I like and admire Carl Laemmle, in whose home I have been entertained, and Henry Henigson and I are friends, but I can not tolerate intimidation even when it is practiced by my friends. If Universal is not satisfied with its present contract with Arthur Lake -and it should be, for it, at least, was of age when it was signed-it should not arm itself with a bludgeon when it starts out to negotiate a new one. It wanted to have Arthur tightly bound before Harold Teen made him famous, which is all right if it were accomplished without threats. Now Arthur is standing pat until Harold Teen

WHICH?

"The Loves of Carmen"! Much more apt
It were to say, "the legs";
For Love is a modest, bashful sprite
Who abides within the heart;
Whose delight is vesper quietude,
When evening lights are low,
Abhorrent of the spirit of
Outré and vulgar show.

But legs! O, sheen of silken hose!
O, grace of knee and calf!
To think of you as bashful sprites—
It is, in truth, to laugh.
Not bashful sprites, but wantons bold,
You make a passing show,
Expressive of the spirit of
The liberties you know.

And Carmen's loves, or Carmen's legs—
Or the legs that Carmen loves—
Whose close-ups so bemused us
We missed, oh quite, the loves;
For love is a tender sentiment,
From the crowd a thing apart,
Abhorrent of the spirit of
The legs of a wanton art.

-GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN.

appears. It serves Universal right. If any other friends of mine use the same tactics I promise that I will enter with the same devilish glee into a plot to circumvent them.

Academy Does Bosses One More Good Turn

CEVERAL times I have been asked why I made no comment on the standard contract for free lance players negotiated by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. "You have been yelling your head off about a square deal for actors," one Academy member put it to me, "and when we secure a good contract for them you ignore it." I have refrained from discussing it because of my reluctance to criticize the Academy which I still think can be made an instrument of benefit to those who work in pictures. I have unbounded respect for its president, Douglas Fairbanks. He himself is entrenched so strongly that he needs no support from the outside, consequently the Academy can be of no benefit to him personally, his activity in connection with it therefore being solely a manifestation of his unselfish interest in screen workers who are not so well off. As a man and an artist Douglas is above reproach, but, like others possessing the same sterling qualities, he can be imposed upon, and I believe he was imposed upon shamefully when he was asked to approve the contract in question. Free lance players were made the victims of a very raw deal when the contract was adopted. It is a lamentable manifestation of the Academy's inclination to serve the producers at the expense of those who work for them. Nothing more unfair to the players could have been drawn up. But while I have been harsh at times when referring to the producers. I do not hold them wholly responsible for this outrage perpetrated in the name of the Academy. The contract was negotiated by Conrad Nagel and Hallam Cooley, representing the actors' section, and B. P. Schulberg and M. C. Levee, representing the producers, all men whom no one would accuse of being actuated by other than worthy motives. Undoubtedly they left the actual drawing of the contract to the Academy's lawyers-and the Academy's lawyers are the lawyers of the producers' association. As a consequence the contract was drawn in a manner to make it purely a producers' document. I can not find in it one paragraph that indicates that the welfare of the free lance players was considered by those who drew it up. It is not an honest contract. It is the work of tricksters who sought only to serve their principal bosses, the producers, and who used the Academy as a cloak behind which to perform their tricks. If the Academy is to serve the end for which it was organized it would repudiate the contract and change its lawyers. I challenge it to point to one of its major acts that was not performed solely in the interests of the producers. The outrageous contract that has been foisted on free lance players is a concrete example of the manner in which it has betrayed consistently those whom it was formed to serve. The peculiar thing about it is that the great majority of those who serve it unselfishly are men and women of high ideals and irreproachable integrity who can not be made to see that they have become the tools of the producers. My charge that the Academy has betrayed screen workers will insense those prominent in the organization, so strong are they in their belief that it is serving the whole industry, and to appease them I will be glad to withdraw the charge if they can point out to me one clause in this contract that was drawn with an unselfish desire to serve the free lance players. And if the Academy repudiates my charge that it is producer-controlled, I wish it would explain why Will Hays is asked to attend meetings of the Academy's board of directors. Hays is not a member of the board, and his only status in the industry is as a representative of the producers. He personifies the force with which screen workers must contend. If the Academy were true to its ideals Hays would have no voice in its deliberations. The fact that he has is but one more indication of the strength of the grip that the producers have on the Academy. It is folly for actors or writers to expect an Academy-made contract to be fair to them. Actors will get a fair contract only through Equity, and the writers only through the Guild.

NLY a person with an abiding confidence in the

Executives Responsible for Gigantic Waste of Money

theory that anything fundamentally sound must eventually assert itself, a doctrine of which I am a disciple, can gather any comfort from the manner in which the producing organizations are conducted now. They are keeping pictures alive and in the most painstaking and elaborate manner are demonstrating how they should not be made. The Eastern bankers who are underwriting the companies are not as foolish as the Schencks, Mayers, Laskys and the others must think they are. Wall Street has its eyes on Hollywood. I am in a position to say this with authority for I know how many financial institutions in the East subscribe to The Spectator. These subscriptions have not come to me because Wall Street is panting to know what I think of Jack Mulhall's latest picture, or because it is anxious to know my views on the punctuation of titles and the use and abuse of close-ups. Wall Street reads The Spectator because it wants to learn from all available sources what is happening to the money that it constantly is called upon to provide for motion picture production. It is learning that a large percentage of the money is wasted, and when it gets all the facts assembled there is going to be a new line-up in Hollywood studios. This is as it should be, as sane production never will come from the present executives. In all properly conducted businesses executives are employees who keep their desks clear in order that there will be nothing to distract their attention from the absorption of new ideas. By the very nature of his duties an executive should be the easiest person in any office to see. Visit the office of George I. Cochran, president of the Pacific Mutual, and give his secretary any half-way intelligent reason for seeing him and you can see him at once. Draw up a plan showing how a considerable sum of money could be saved in making a United Artists picture and try to get an appointment to discuss it with John W. Considine, Jr., in charge of United Artists production. Just try! Never a week goes by without someone coming to me with ideas that would be of vast benefit to the motion picture industry. The story always is the same. My caller has tried for weeks or months, as the case may be, to see Mayer, Schenck, Lasky, or Laemmle, and finally comes to me for advice as to what to do with his good idea. Always my

answer is the same: I tell him to forget it until Wall Street steps in and compels pictures to be sane. The producers who complain that production costs are too high need not look beyond their executives in their search for the cause. These men are squandering many millions of dollars a year and turn a deaf ear to any suggestion that might put a stop to the waste. They are working themselves to death chasing their tails and are making just as much forward progress as a puppy does when engaged in the same pastime. They honestly think that they are being loyal to their employers when they shut themselves off from the world and surround themselves with secretaries who build walls that new thoughts can not penetrate. It is a brand of loyalty that is costing scores of millions of dollars every year and which is responsible for the present stagnation of screen art. If the executives were competent they would have time to listen to new ideas and rested brains to deal with them. But they are not competent, and as long as they are in the saddle we will have poor pictures made expensively.

The Spectator's Medal for Best Love Scene

ROM several sources come requests for more information regarding my conception of a love scene, the requests being prompted by my offer of a medal for the best love scene shown on a screen during the present year. Perhaps I was not sufficiently specific when making my first announcement. For the purpose of the award we will interpret the term "love scene" as the male lead's first declaration of love for the girl playing opposite him, and her acceptance of him. In other words, the medal will be presented to the director who directs the best proposal and acceptance. I suppose a love scene is also one showing a man proposing and being rejected, but as such a scene could not end with a clinch, anyway, we will not consider it, for the purpose of the award is to encourage directors to advance beyond their present conventional treatment of scenes showing the girl accepting the boy. I have been asked what kind of love scene I like best. I do not know. I have proposed only once and did it by telegraph, which precludes the possibility of obtaining Mrs. Spectator's help in conjuring up the ideal scene, as it was she who got the telegram. She just called to me from her seat by the fire where she is unwinding a ball of yarn off a kitten, that never since she received the telegram has she felt any nervousness when she sees a messenger boy come up the walk, which is very nice of her. If directors will not look upon some random thoughts as specifications, I don't mind saying that the medal may be awarded for a scene in which a kiss does not figure. I am presenting the medal to encourage originality and as a kiss now is the leading feature of practically all our love scenes, no great originality would be shown in featuring it. As I look upon a declaration of love from a boy to a girl as something sweet, tender, and sacred, I can not conceive of it being made in the presence of one or more witnesses. On the screen now we see love scenes staged in the middle of football fields, on race tracks, in court rooms, and other such public places, which rob them of all the qualities that I consider essential to them. And of one thing I am positive: the medal will not go to any director who shows his love scene in individual or two-shot close-ups. The pictorial value of

the whole scene will be taken into account, and close-ups have no pictorial value. It does not require a close-up to show a boy's arm stealing around a girl's waist or her head shyly seeking his shoulder. I do not believe the medal will be won by any scene which does not have the full figures of the lovers in it all the time. And I do not think that the winning scene will have either cuts or titles in it. As I am trying to encourage sustained long or semimedium shots I am inclined to think that such a scene will get the medal. And it is quite possible that the backs of the lovers will be towards the camera. By the time the scene is reached we will have seen enough of their faces. As a love scene derives its value from the manner in which the love element has been developed it is unlikely that the prize will be won by a scene that is shown abruptly. An audience can derive satisfaction from a love scene only to the extent that it is interested in the lovers and sympathizes with their feelings, consequently the winning scene really will start a long way back in the picture and will gather its charm from the manner of its development. I have in mind no ideal setting. The scene may start in an interior and end in an exterior, or may be enacted on a coal barge. The characters will be of more importance to it than the setting.

Should Keep Step Ahead of Market

NLY by keeping a step ahead of those who support it can any art advance. Artists are essentially pioneers. What screen art lacks most is a spirit of adventure. Producers are afraid to do something that has not been done before. They think it is a safe policy that will yield the greatest profit. One of their greatest obsessions is that the public wants only young people on the screen. For every young screen star who can act we have a dozen who can't, with the result that the public is given very little of what I firmly believe it wants to buy: good acting. Underworld is one of the most profitable pictures that Paramount ever turned out and its leading feature is the performance of George Bancroft who has graduated from the matinee idol class. Beau Geste is notable principally because of the magnificent acting of Noah Beery, who some years ago ceased being a youth. The leading feature of Stella Dallas is the performance of Belle Bennett, who is characterized as one of the older people in the cast. Louise Dresser's acting made The Goose Woman a great picture, and the superb performance of H. B. Warner was responsible for the success of Silence. Of course, we have had many pictures in which young players did good work, but that does not alter the fact that those I have mentioned were successful because they contained good acting by older artists. H. B. Warner could be made one of the best box-office attractions in the business if he were featured in parts that were worthy of his ability, and the same is true of many other excellent actors and actresses who now appear only in supporting roles. Producers are aware of the fact that the public is asking for new faces, and they make an effort to meet the demand with pretty faces attached to people who can't act. Obviously if the public were satisfied with those whom it sees on the screen now there would be no desire for a change, but are the producers right in interpreting whatever degree of discontent there may be as a yearning for

more young people whom the public has not seen before? Is it not probable that the public's yearning would be satisfied if pictures contained more good acting? What producers seem to overlook is that audiences are being educated in the art of the screen. Even a moron must learn to appreciate what good acting is if he be sufficiently faithful in his attendance at picture houses. No mind can remain static even if it feeds on an unvarying diet. It will outgrow the same dishes and will be satisfied with something more advanced. Even if the public itself did not manifest its discontent, producers should know that they can not go on forever without varying what they are serving those who support the industry. The producer of any article of commerce should anticipate the wants of his market and improve the quality of his wares before his customers realize that any improvement is necessary. Motion picture producers do not work on this principle. They are convinced that the public wants only what it has had and that it never will demand any change. What pictures containing excellent performances have been boxoffice failures? Emil Jannings is not a youth but his Way of All Flesh is an outstanding success solely on account of his magnificent acting. Producers continue to push very young people to the front, but Pola Negri, Gloria Swanson, Douglas Fairbanks, Corinne Griffith, Florence Vidor, Irene Rich, Reg. Denny and many others retain their box-office value although they no longer are children and despite the fact that their ages cover a wide range. It's acting the public wants, not youth.

Jumping on Me for "Sunrise" Review

HAT my review of Sunrise was too superficial is the charge made by a correspondent. "Not to include Murnau's masterpiece among your ten best pictures of the year is preposterous," he writes. "Evidently you did not grasp what the director laid before you-a great, poignant, human document. Before condemning by faint praise such a notable picture you should acquaint yourself with the message the director had to convey, and then base your criticism on the degree in which he delivered the message." The first time I saw the Venus de Milo in the Louvre I wondered why the world had raved about it since it was dug up a hundred years before. I spent perhaps two minutes on the battered lady and then passed into the room where hangs Mona Lisa. More disappointment. I did not think the original was as intriguing as many copies I had seen and I never had been intrigued even by the copies. By and by I found myself once more in front of Venus. Something about her interested me, I was not quite sure what. I went out to the gardens to smoke a pipe. While smoking I wondered what Mona was smiling at. I knocked the ashes out of my pipe and visited the lady again. To sum up: On subsequent visits to Paris the first persons I called on were Venus and Mona, and altogether I have spent many hours with each of them. They are fixtures that one can study at his leisure, the only method by which a consciousness of their tremendous artistic value may be gained. Screen art is fleeting. One must catch all the artistic value in a scene during the few seconds it is on view. He can not go back to it and study it. If the world's only acquaintance with Mona Lisa had been through a close-up of it in a motion picture, Da

Vinci's great painting would be unknown. Art on the screen must be obvious. The world has had over four hundred years in which to contemplate Mona Lisa as a painting. It would not have four seconds in which to contemplate it as a motion picture scene. Murnau may have put as much art into some of his scenes as Da Vinci put on his canvas, but what I missed must have been too subtle for me to grasp in the moments the scenes were before me, which makes them, as far as I am concerned, poor motion picture art. Art is that which the viewer sees, not what the artist conceives. Motion pictures are designed solely for entertainment purposes, therefore the inclusion in them of art that does not entertain robs the thing included of its status as art. When an artist becomes so artistic that he can not be understood he ceases to be an artist. All artistic endeavor is an effort to convey a message, and when he who runs can not catch the message it is the fault of the artist, providing, of course, that the runner has the average intelligence that is necessary to the comprehension of that particular form of art and the opportunities it presents for study. The screen offers no opportunity for study, and that in screen art which is not obvious is lost. In reviewing a picture I must not search for and extoll something that is too deep for the comprehension of the vast majority of those for whom the picture is made, the people who merely are looking for entertainment. In line with this theory, which, I contend, is the proper one for a reviewer, I see in a picture only what it makes me see. I do not search for hidden messages, nor do I concern myself with what was in the director's mind. As a viewer of pictures I deem that it is the director's mission to reach my mind, which always is receptive and which should not be overworked. To refute the charge of another correspondent that I was prejudiced against Sunrise because it came from the Fox lot I offer my review of Grandma Bernle in the last Spectator.

Some Stupid Habits That Pictures Have

NE thing that I would like to commend Nevada, a Paramount Western, for is the fact that Gary Cooper rides into the picture with his horse at a walk. The screen has contracted a great collection of habits to which it adheres religiously. One of them is that a cowboy hero must come dashing into town no matter how long his ride to reach it. In the days before cowboys took to Fords they did their hard riding on the trail and when they reached town their horses were spent. In a motion picture the point that the opening shot generally wants to put over is that the hero has had a long, hard ride, yet his horse hits a stride that it could not maintain for a mile. A horse at a walk creates the impression that is desired. Here is another funny screen habit. A and B are in a room; A leaves, expecting B to await his return. B sneaks out as soon as A's back is turned, and when A returns he stands and stares at the chair where B had sat. He does not look around to see where B is; he "registers" his amazement by continuing to stare at the chair. You see variations of this practice in many pictures. In The Cat and the Canary Tully Marshall is murdered and his body disappears mysteriously. When some of the characters return to the room in which they left the body they do not . notice that it is missing until they reach the spot where it

was, and then they stare at the spot for several feet of film. Why didn't they look around to see if the body had been dragged to some other place in the same room? "Registering" is one of the most idiotic habits of the screen. A director asked me the other night what I thought of his latest picture and I told him that among the poor shots in it were those "registering" knocks at doors or the ringing of doorbells. He told me that such shots were necessary, and went into particulars to prove it, his proof having the endorsement of two other directors who arrived at my home while the debate was on. They were the vanguard of others who came in that night to play bridge. I organized the early arrivals and the later ones as they arrived, and every time the doorbell rang all hands "registered" the fact by stopping their conversations and staring at the door. When the later guests arrived in turn they were astonished greatly by their reception and were made so nervous by the stares of the others that the men looked down to reassure themselves that they had not forgotten their trousers and the women did the feminine equivalent for the same thing. We merely had lifted bodily something that is done seriously on the screen and it turned out to be one of the funniest "gags" ever seen at a party. My director friends were convinced there was some sense in my argument. Another silly habit is repeated constantly. A is making a frantic search for B. When he sees B he stops and waves his arms at him before approaching him. There are a lot of such habits to which the screen clings as stubbornly as it does to the close-up habit. None of them is founded on common sense. Examine any one of our few really good pictures and you will find that they are free from those hoary devices. That is what makes them good pictures. In spite of the lesson they teach, however, ninety per cent of our directors go right on doing the same old stuff. It is only in a business way that the motion picture industry is advancing rapidly. As an art the screen is advancing at a snail's pace. But it is greater than those who now retard its progress. It will sweep on past them. Directors who hope to keep in the vanguard must strike a new note in direction. They must learn that backs of characters have photographic and dramatic value, and that the public is growing tired of faces. As they must continue to tell the same old stories they must tell them differently or make way for those who can. There are many directors out of jobs. In most cases it is because they have nothing new to contribute to the screen. The art has passed them. It will pass a lot of the others if they do not begin to think.

Marks the Inevitable Progress of Pictures

THE Jazz Singer definitely establishes the fact that talking pictures are imminent. Everyone in Hollywood can rise up and declare that they are not, and it will not alter the fact. If I were an actor with a squeaky voice I would worry. There is one scene in The Jazz Singer that conclusively sounds the knell of the silent picture: that showing Jolson at the piano, playing idly and talking to his mother. It is one of the most beautiful scenes I ever have seen on a screen. How anyone can view it without seeing the end of our present noiseless screen entertainment is something that I can not understand. What immediately succeeds it is so flat by comparison that it

becomes ridiculous, and you can not point to any art that has clung to anything ridiculous. The whole program that we saw at the Criterion makes silent pictures out of date. The curtain-raiser, a short reel in which the story is told entirely by voices, shows what can be done, and to argue that the public will be satisfied with motion only after it has been shown that voices can be added is to argue that the mind of the public has become stagnant. I am in a combatative mood about speaking pictures because I just have left the office of a producer who proved conclusively that such screen entertainment never would be popular, and who urged me not to advance a contrary view, because it would give my readers the idea that I am an impractical dreamer. The silly ass! I suppose that if he had been toddling about when Bell invented the telephone he would have produced proof that the public never would accept it. It is possible to tell stories on the screen better with voices than without them, and to declare that the public never will demand the best is to combat all the history of human achievement. If I were a producer I would give sound devices my major attention and I would develop artists who can talk and directors who know color, for if there be anything certain about the future of pictures it is that in two years or less we will be making talking pictures in color and that no others will be shown in the big houses. The Jazz Singer demonstrates how sound devices will change motion picture technic. They will allow simultaneous action. A scene shows a Jewish congregation singing, and we hear the singing. We see a cut to another scene while we still hear the voices, registering that the service continues in progress while the boy visits his home; then we come back to the congregation and end the sequence when the singing ceases. Off-stage sounds will be reproduced without cuts to show their origin, which will simplify shooting. When we have a scene showing people standing in a window looking down on a band which is marching on the street below, there will be no need for a cut to the band, as we can hear it and do not need to see it. No sound device that I yet have heard is perfect, but all of them are good enough even in their present state of development to be used generally. As speaking pictures become better known the public will demand them, and producers who do not keep up with a public demand will be forced out of business by those who do. It is the same way with color. It will take only a few all-color features to make the public clamour for more of them, and the way to make most money is to give the public what it clamours for. It will be only a short step then to a demand for action, sound, and color in the same picture.

About Mr. Al Jolson and Miss May McAvoy

SUAL motion picture standards can not be applied to a criticism of The Jazz Singer. What it lacks in story interest is compensated for by the fact that it is a pioneer in a new screen adventure, and every reel of it is interesting on that account. We have had lots of pictures showing people singing songs, but this is the first time we have heard some of the songs. In silent pictures the singing is indicated by cuts to the singer, while in The Jazz Singer the camera is held on the singer until the song is completed, the most obvious variation in screen

technic, for which the general use of sound devices will be responsible. I noticed that apparently no effort was made in the long shots to syncronize the lip movement of the singers with the words they recorded, a defect that was minimized by quick cutting. And it was the only defect I noticed in the Vitaphone. The reproduced musical accompaniment was a notable feature of the evening's entertainment. An attachment that will bring symphony orchestras into moving picture houses will make the program more attractive. I would like to see the Vitaphone applied to a story with more universal appeal than The Jazz Singer possesses. It is too Jewish, a fault that I would find in it if there were too much Catholic, Mason or anything else. Al Cohn made a worthy adaptation of the story and Alan Crossland directed it well, although he gives us many more close-ups than were warranted. Most of them mean nothing. There is one that emphasizes the fact that no intelligence is exercised in their use, and that those who cut them into pictures do not know what they are for. Jolson returns to the home he left when a boy. In the early sequences the home is planted and the boy's place in it shown. When Jolson returns he embraces his mother, and the embrace is shown in a large close-up which effectually blots out the home and gives us only the two heads. Such treatment destroys the spirit of the scene, as so many close-ups do. The scene should have been presented in a medium shot which preserved as much of the home as its frame would have permitted. Jolson did not return only to his mother; he returned to his home as well as to her, and the spirit of the scene demanded that a portion of the home in which we had seen him as a boy should have been part of the picture of the reunion. The facial expressions of the mother and son were matters of no value to the scene, for we could imagine what they were. The only value of the scene was the presence of the two once more in the home in which we had been accustomed to seeing them, and the close-up robbed it of that value. I was not impressed particularly with Jolson as a screen actor. He is too jerky, and is entirely devoid of repression. I like his voice when he does not stress the sobbing quality. May McAvoy is the girl and is as delightful as she always is. Long before I started The Spectator May became one of my screen favorites and her every appearance strengthens my liking for her. The love element in The Jazz Singer is handled admirably. Warner Oland gives a feeling and convincing performance as Jolson's father. Despite the handicap of a comprehensive beard he gives a telling impression of the proud old Jew, his eyes being used effectively to register his emotions. Eugenie Besserer makes an impressive and sympathetic mother, and Otto Lederer contributes another strong characterization. The Jazz Singer will have a definite place in screen history and Warner Brothers are to be congratulated upon blazing a trail along which all other producers soon will be travelling.

"Quality Street" and Barrie Whimsy

SIDNEY Franklin undertook a practically impossible job when he attempted in Quality Street to put the whimsicalities of Barrie on the screen. Herbert Brennon did not have such a hard task with Peter Pan, as it is a story that deals with fairies and children, with which, being delightful in themselves, it is easy to delight us.

Franklin, however, had only a girl of a period that we have lost sight of, doing things in a way that we congratulate ourselves upon having outgrown. And he gives us an interesting picture, one rich in whimsicality and Barrie's rather shy humor, but it lacks the Barrie spirit at its best, something that I don't think anyone can put on the screen. Certainly no one could do it better than Sid has done. The man who gave us Smilin' Through is happiest with such a story as Quality Street. And not since he directed Marion Davies in Beverly of Graustark has she given such a capable performance. Particularly in the impersonation of her own niece is she delightful. To Conrad Nagel goes the credit for carrying off the acting honors. Conrad seems to be stepping out. He is getting a succession of good parts and is proving himself to be an excellent actor, something that he has been for a long time without getting parts that kept us reminded of it. Helen Jerome Eddy also contributes largely to the entertainment value of the picture, and the woman who plays Patty supplies some pleasing comedy. A big feature of Quality Street is the beautiful production that Metro has given it. Both exteriors and interiors are most attractive, so much so that the whole thing should have been shot in color. If the Technicolor process had been used Quality Street would have been such a pictorial treat that we would have forgiven its story weakness. With such process readily available to producers I can not understand why they persist in ignoring it and shooting in black and white feature pictures that should be shot in color or not at all. Sid Franklin's main difficulty was that his vehicle was all atmosphere and no story. The picture gives the impression that he had a terrific struggle to spin it out to the necessary number of reels. Not until the last reel does the story move rapidly and reach its most entertaining point. Technically it could have been improved upon. Such things as door-plates, knockers, window panes, and heraldic panes, as well as some of the costumes worn by the women, were wrong. The trousers of the boys in the school sequence belong to a later period than that of the picture. Reference to the Napoleonic wars fixes the period, and anyone who has read about it should know that the British military regulations of that period forbade the wearing of moustaches. Yet Lionel Belmore, recruiting sargeant, is shown walking down the street wearing a moustache and side whiskers, and men and officers at the ball given after their return from Waterloo wear moustaches. One would think that such a powerful organization as Metro would be more careful about its technical details. Quality Street suffers from the usual dose of senseless close-ups. At least one series of them is consistent with a title introducing it. Marion and Conrad are in the scene. "'Tis the first time we've been alone this evening", says one of them, and to make them very much alone the rest of the scene is shown in individual close-ups. A scene of the sort should never be divided into close-ups, but there are very few people in the studios who know it.

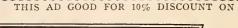
Typical Case of a Senseless Close-Up

A GOSSIPY woman crosses a street in Quality Street to relate a choice piece of scandal. The set has considerable pictorial value, being a reproduction of a winding thoroughfare running through an English village.

I have motored through scores of them that looked just like the one in Quality Street. The gossipy woman is not one of the major characters. We do not know who she is, our interest in her being confined to the fact that she is crossing the street to relate some gossip to people who live on the other side. The scene is shown in a close-up, a truck shot keeping the woman's face bobbing up and down on the screen as she crosses the thoroughfare. Possibly the shot would be defended on the score that the close-up showed the determined expression on the woman's face, which is about as sensible as saying it was shot that way to establish the fact that there was no wart on the woman's nose. We were not interested in the expression; the whole value of the scene was that gossip was being broadcast. Anyone with picture brains would have retained the pictorial value of the street and would have shown the woman making determined strides across it, thus making the fact that she was crossing the street the important thing. I cite this particular shot as a perfect example of a closeup that could not have been the result of any line of sensible reasoning. Sid Franklin is one of the best directors we have. That is a fact that has been established. He is intelligent and original, yet so deep-rooted is the closeup curse that he cuts into his picture, as a matter of routine, a close-up which means nothing in itself, and which takes the place of a shot that would have preserved both the spirit and pictorial value of the picture. I have said quite frequently in The Spectator that the close-up was a device of the director to cover his inability to shoot a scene as it should be shot. Only a few of our directors have as much intelligence as the nature of their profession demands, and of necessity they must do their work within the narrow limits of their mentalities. As a consequence the feature of their work that requires the application of the smallest amount of intelligence—the close-up-has assumed a prominence out of all proportion to the thought that underlies its use. It has become so prominent that producers and their executives, who as a class are as dumb as the dumbest directors, have grown to believe that it is essential to pictures, and they will not permit intelligent directors to discontinue its use. Stars who have a voice in the composition of their pictures hold the queer conviction that close-ups help to establish and maintain their prominence. It is ridiculous reasoning. No close-up inserted where one does not belong is of any value to the subject of it, and anything that detracts from a picture, as a meaningless close-up must, can have no other effect than detracting from the impressiveness of its star. A star is no greater than his picture, and it is by his picture as a whole, not by huge reproductions of his features, that his reputation is maintained. I am aware that my constant harping upon the abuse of close-ups must become tiresome to those who read The Spectator regularly, but I plead in my defense that as only unintelligent people are responsible for the abuse, nothing but constant hammering will make an impression on their dull mentalities. The curse is too deep rooted to yield to gentle treatment. If my arguments to eradicate it were addressed to people of intelligence repetition would not be necessary. But as stupid people are responsible for it I must apply the only remedy that might make an impression on stupidity.

Joesph Von Sternberg Gives Us a Good One

THEN The Spectator was quite young and didn't have a deuce of a lot of readers and not much of a reputation, it made this statement: "Some day Evelyn Brent is going to be given an opportunity to demonstrate on the screen the full extent of her ability, and thereafter she is going to be travelling up among the headliners." At that time Miss Brent was starring in F.B.O. pictures which meant less in the way of importance than it does now. In the very next Spectator I reviewed the second picture directed by Joseph Von Sternberg, and wrote: "It demonstrates that he is one of our greatest directors and that in the screen's inevitable progress along artistic lines he undoubtedly will be one of the leaders." The picture which I reviewed never was released, and Salvation Hunters, Von Sternberg's other one, was a boxoffice failure, consequently my prophecy regarding his future was not based on the Hollywood money standard. The other night I saw a picture directed by Von Sternberg and in it the leading feminine role was played by Evelyn Brent. Both now work for the biggest producing organization in the world, and the picture is important as Emil Jannings, one of the world's greatest actors, stars in it. It shows that Evelyn Brent is "travelling up among the headliners", and that Von Sternberg already is "one of the leaders". Wherever The Last Command is shown I think it will be regarded as a truly great picture. It opens in a Hollywood motion picture studio, moves to Russia in war time, and ends on a Hollywood stage. The Hollywood sequences more faithfully portray motion picture activities than any other picture that I have seen succeeds in doing. These sequences should have great audience appeal, for the public is yearning to get behind the scenes in studios and never before has it been given such an interesting peep. Jannings plays the part of a Russian grand duke, a cousin of the Czar, who was the strongest man in Russia and who ultimately became a motion picture extra in Hollywood after the revolution had stripped him of all his power and material possessions. In the opening sequence we see William Powell, a director, order that Jannings be called to the set next morning, and next morning we see the old Russian among the hundreds of other extras, the sequence being directed in a masterly manner. Jannings is a pitiful figure and will awaken the deepest sympathy of all who see the picture. Dejected, discouraged, he gazes into the mirror in his make-up box, and then comes a dissolve to Russia where we see him as a smart military man of supreme power. More admirable direction brings out the occurrences leading up to the revolution, Von Sternberg handling his subject so skillfully that the picture leans toward neither side. Graphically and impressively, and in compositions that have great pictorial value, he gives us an impression of the whole great contest and the conditions that confronted both officers and men. After viewing the





"The Choice of Critics"

Musical Instruments at any Music Store or at Manufacturers SHIRESON BROS., 349 N. Main St., Los Angeles, Calif. Result of 25 yrs.' experience manufacturing high grade instruments picture you will have a better understanding of the revolution, and in respect to the manner in which it accomplishes this The Last Command will rate as an historical document of value to future generations.

Great Moments in "The Last Command"

HE Last Command is filled with dramatic episodes which Von Sternberg handles with extraordinary appreciation of their values. Evelyn Brent is a revolutionist to whom Jannings takes a fancy. She pretends to return his infatuation, and lures him to her room, her purpose being to shoot him. When she rises and points the gun at him her resolution wavers, for Jannings' bravery awakens her admiration. He takes her in his arms. It is an intensely dramatic scene, but it is played as quietly and as devoid of heroics as if coffee drinking were the only thing in which the two were interested. There is much in Von Sternberg's direction of this sequence which Hollywood might study with profit to itself. In a scene showing a woman about to shoot a man the situation is dramatic. It is not necessary for the parties to it to act dramatically, for such acting can not add to the drama there is in the intention to murder. Few directors seem to appreciate this. Given situations dramatic in themselves, they overdo them by making their actors dramatic also. The only effect that this treatment can have is to distract the attention of the audience from the drama in the situation to the drama in the acting, which I do not believe is good technic. In his treatment of the sequence Von Sternberg accomplishes the double purpose of strengthening the scenes and saving Evelyn for her big scene later, in which she lets herself go and to save Jannings from the mob, apparently becomes one of its most violent members. The mob sequence is handled admirably. In it both Jannings and Evelyn do their greatest acting, and it is great. Von Sternberg leads up to it impressively with scenes that are strong both in drama and pictorial quality. When Jannings defies the mob that seeks his life he is truly magni-Although he is the personification of tyrannical Russia, he never forfeits the sympathy of the audience. Evelyn saves his life by pursuading the mob to take him to St. Petersburg for his execution and she makes possible his escape from the train that is conveying him to the capital. After he leaves the train a bridge collapses under it, and in a thrilling scene we see it sink below the ice on a river. Evelyn goes down with it. It is a refreshing departure to drown the heroine of a picture. And The Last Command goes still further. In the last sequence it kills Jannings himself—and the ending is a happy one in spite of that fact, for we know that the lowly extra, who once was so powerful, has come to the end of his suffering. Bill Powell, who in the early Russian sequences was shown as a revolutionist, escapes to America and becomes a motion picture director in Hollywood. He was subjected to harsh treatment by Jannings in Russia, and the tables are turned when the two meet in Hollywood. Jannings is working in a scene showing a night attack by Russian troops, and he again dons a uniform to lead his troops. He imagines that it is real, and is so overcome by the intensity of his love for Russia that he drops dead. Over his body Powell, who is directing the picture, reverently places the Russian flag, and the camera backs up until the body, the director and his assistant are in the background, and three motion picture cameras are in the foreground. On this scene there is the final fadeout, a great ending to a great picture. In spite of the fine performances it is a director's picture, and when it is released Von Sternberg will be recognized as one of the very few directors who have made two good pictures in succession, Underworld being the other one. The Spectator's prophecy has been fulfilled.

"Get Your Man" Got the Wrong One

ET Your Man got one of the wrong kind for its leading male part. The story is one of an American girl who makes a dead set for, and gets, the heir to a French dukedom. The idea is good. An American girl in a foreign country always contains possibilities. We can chuckle over her success in circumventing the conventions of a country other than ours. It is the kind of theme that has value to the extent that it is convincing. In the case of Get Your Man it is not convincing for the scion of the old French family is played by Charles Rogers, who suggests a Frenchman about as much as I suggest a Hottentot. If I had to select the most thoroughly typical American boy on the screen I very likely would pick Buddy Rogers. It is something over a year ago that I saw a boy with personality playing a bit in a Paramount picture. I put Arch Reeve's publicity department to a lot of trouble to find out the name of the boy and finally was told that it was Buddy Rogers. In The Spectator I advised the young fellow to change his name and take his profession seriously, promising him that if he did he would have a prosperous career on the screen. Rogers has justified my prediction, but he's no Frenchman. But he is on the Paramount pay-roll, and apparently that makes him anything that Paramount wants him to be, even though it spoils a picture. Get Your Man would have been vastly more entertaining if its leading man had looked like a Frenchman and acted like one. The chief thing that the picture accomplishes is to strengthen Dorothy Arzner's reputation as a director. The young woman has ability. She has a fine sense of composition, and is not averse to telling some of her story in medium and long shots, as all our present directors must do some day or make room for others who will. Miss Arzner supplies comedy touches through the medium of the story, and drags nothing in by the heels. If Paramount intends to let her handle stories with a foreign setting, it should allow her to go abroad and acquire a knowledge of foreign manners and customs. While she can not be held responsible for Buddy's inability to look like a Frenchman, she can not be excused for his failure to act like one. In an early sequence he bumps into Clara Bow on a sidewalk and excuses himself without removing his hat, and when he leaves her he merely tips it as a cabman used to when we had cabmen. Any gentleman of any country would have removed his hat while conversing with a beautiful young woman on the street. In France he would have made a ceremony of it. A thing of this sort is a very small item in the sum total of a feature picture, but the little things are the ones that carry the burden of maintaining a picture's atmosphere. In the full length of Get Your Man I could not detect one touch that was distinctly French.

Clara Bow will not lose any of her personal prestige by virtue of the picture's failure to rate with others in which she has appeared. She is a most accomplished young woman, one of our few natural actresses. This picture gives two veterans an opportunity to remind us of their continued presence in Hollywood. Joseph Swickard and Harvey Clark have important parts and give most satisfactory performances. I do not understand why some producer does not give Swickard chances to demonstrate what a fine dramatic actor he is. Exhibitors may book Get Your Man. It is a frothy little thing, but mildly amusing. Paramount has given it an artistic and adequate production, and it was photographed in a manner that brings out all its pictorial value. The titles are very good.

"Flying Romeos" Is Full of Faults

LOCKING laughs at a preview is a harmless pastime, but it yields little of real value to the producer of the picture previewed. Recently I saw The Flying Romeos in preview at the Westlake Theatre. The house was crowded. I did not find the picture amusing, but I noticed that the audience seemed to be enjoying it, as there was considerable laughter. There being nothing on the screen to interest me. Decame interested in my neighbors in the loges, and I noted their reaction to the picture. It was designed as a rollicking comedy, but no one anywhere near me laughed out loud once during the entire showing. Perhaps one hundred people forming a circle of which I was the center sat stolidly through the picture and did not once register audibly their approval of the comedy of George Sidney, unquestionably one of the most talented actors on the screen, and Charlie Murray, who has a large following, although to me all his performances seem to be the same. But the record of the laughs as revealed by the studio count no doubt will show about the usual number earned by a comedy of the same length, and First National will pride itself upon having turned out another success. I think a count that would show how many people kept quiet while the others laughed would be more enlightening. Flying Romeos is too silly for serious criticism. It is a poor two-reeler stretched to six or seven reels. But it reminded me of something that for a long time I've been intending to write about. Three people are credited on the screen with having written the titles, and they read as if they had been created by the huddle system. Undoubtedly the theory upon which they were written was that as they were to appear in a comedy they must be comedy titles. They make strenuous attempts to be funny, but manage only to be silly. But even if they had achieved their ambition to be clever they would not have been the kind of titles that such a picture should have. Sidney and Murray are presented as two exceedingly dumb barbers, but they speak titles that we would expect only from wisecracking collegians. Assuming that their antics were as funny as they were supposed to be and that the titles also were funny, we would have a picture made monotonous by the similarity of the action and the titles. The Flying Romeos would be an infinitely better picture if its titles had been serious, and if the main characters had been given speeches more in keeping with the personalities they depicted. Comedies of this sort should be relieved by serious titles, a suggestion that I commend

to those who make them. About the only interesting feature of this production is that it was directed by Mervyn Le Roy, who looks as if he but recently had escaped from his teens and who has been entrusted with the direction of Harold Teen, which I believe First National intends to make a pretentious picture. If ever we are to have a new note in direction it must be struck by the young ones who are starting in the business. Instead of giving us anything new, Le Roy commits most of the faults that are so common in the work of the old standbys. He shows a marked disposition to line up his characters facing the camera, a particularly stupid fault. And despite the fact that every time a picture contains a reporter who carries a notebook the papers of the country roar about it, Le Roy shows us a newspaperman carrying the inevitable notebook. Another inexcusable blunder is his grouping of an excited mob that flocks to an airplane to greet its descending aviators. He leaves a lane through the crowd to enable the camera to pick up the aviators. It robs a mob of all conviction when it is grouped in a manner that makes it apparent that it knows it is being photographed.

 $W^{ ext{E CAN}}$ view with tolerance a little fellow imitating a bigger one. Creative brains always will be preyed upon by people without them. It is something that we expect and therefore tolerate. But when a big fellow imitates a smaller one we lose patience with him. We feel that he should do his own thinking. Harold Lloyd introduced to us the photographic method which apparently allows an actor to hang by his eyebrows on the cornice of a skyscraper. Variations of it have appeared in countless little comedies whose producers make a business of plagiarism. Warner Brothers put two men in the framework of a cow in The Better 'Ole and derived much rich comedy from it. In Now We're in the Air Paramount calmly appropriates both Lloyd's photographic method and the Warner cow. I did not sit through the entire Beery-Hatton picture, but I saw more than half of it and in what I saw there was not a single new comedy idea. It is amazing that the biggest producing organization in the world can not do its own thinking along comedy lines. One would think that if it can not employ people who can write comedies it would refrain from producing them. I dignify In the Air when I classify it as a comedy. It is a weak and woefully pathetic farce. Its predecessors in which the same team appeared were just as bad, but the first, Behind the Front, unfortunately for Beery and Hatton, made a lot of money, not because it was inherently funny, but because it came at a time when people wanted to laugh at the war, and the others were perpetrated in the hope that they would make similar clean-ups. Perhaps they have, but they have not done Paramount any good. They have damned hopelessly any claims that it may advance as a producer of comedies. When we view In the Air and consider that Paramount has made another comedy which it deems too poor to release we wonder just how frightful the one on the shelf must be.

THREE hours after I left my home in Hollywood a couple of weeks ago I was driving off the first tee of one of the most beautiful golf courses in the world, that of the Ojai Country Club, in Ojai Valley. For the majesty

of its setting there is no other course in California that begins to compare with it, and if you are looking for a course that will test your golfing skill there are few in the world that approach it. I spent three days on the course and Earle Foxe was the only motion picture person I encountered during that time, in spite of the fact that one can reach the valley over perfect roads in two-and-ahalf hours. The valley itself is the most beautiful spot that I have found in California. It is surrounded completely with mountains, strong in that mystic quality of romance that all our hills possess. In one direction are hills of rock and soil, barren of foliage and looking like a great back-drop for a mountain scene. Across the valley from them are hills up which live oaks climb, small fellows with their arms not yet grotesquely twisted like those the veterans of their species hold out in benediction on the brown soil in which they grow. From a distance the oak leaves blend into a velvet covering for the hills, and in the evening when the sun sinks beyond the western rim the velvet imitates the colors it finds in the illuminated clouds it leaves behind. On the floor of the valley is the town of Ojai, the most distinctively Spanish town I have found in the state, even though I do not believe that there is a Spaniard or a Mexican in it. Why motion picture people do not indulge in the pleasures Ojai Valley has for them I can not imagine. There is an excellent hotel, the Foothills. I would advise you to phone for reservations, and spend a day or two in the valley. If I have exaggerated its delights, send your bill to me.

QUEER idea that producers have is that the public A is interested in the love affairs of only youngsters in their late teens or early twenties. Like most of the notions that infest Hollywood, this one is not based on sound reasoning. The heart attacks of people but lately emerged from the state of adolescence are not to be taken seriously. A boy or a girl of about twenty is more apt to love a different person every week than to have a permanent affection for one. We tolerate childish love affairs on the screen only because we have grown accustomed to them, and for the further reason that we have little else in the love line to become interested in. No really great love story with a boy and a girl as the principal characters can be told on the screen. Boys and girls can't act, and you can not get away from the fact that the public demands acting, even though it gets so little of it that it is amazing that it should know what acting is. A woman of about twenty-eight and a man from thirty-five to forty are the ideal screen lovers. The young people in the audience would be interested in such a love story as they are in love with love, consequently they can sigh over it no matter in what garb it is presented to them; and the older people, who, as I said, can not take the puppy love seriously, can enjoy a well told story dealing with characters old enough to know their own minds.

EMIL Jannings is a motion picture extra in The Last Command. In a powerful scene as the picture ends he dies on a picture set. He imagines that he again is a powerful Russian general, and his emotion overcomes him. His acting is so impressive that the audience might share his illusion were it not for the fact that he dies with his eyes closed, thus convincing us that he really is a motion

picture person, for it is only motion picture persons who die that way. In The Jazz Singer Warner Oland closes his eyes and dies, but he saves the scene by opening them after he is dead to allow the fadeout to be a correct representation of a death scene. Joe Von Sternberg defends the Jannings scene with the argument that the staring eyes of a dead man would be too gruesome. Art has no sentiment. It either is true to itself or it is not art. If it were not thought advisable to show Jannings with his eyes open the scene should have been shot from an angle that would not have made them prominent. No person dies with his eyes closed, and a motion picture has no right to show one dying in any other way.

WHEN Quality Street reaches England it is going to strengthen the impression over there that Hollywood is full of people without learning. In this issue I review the picture and point out some of its technical faults, but by a process of mental research to decide what picture that I have seen recently comes farthest from properly presenting its period I find myself back at Quality Street. Its period was one that boasted many artists who left a pictorial record of almost every phase of life. English prints of the period are common, but Quality Street ignored them. Every gentleman of the time wore a watch fob of ribbon with seals dangling on it. In the picture Conrad Nagel wears a watch fob unlike anything ever worn in England. There are thousands of houses in England to-day that bear testimony to the pride that Englishmen of the picture's period took in the plates in which their doorknobs were set. In Quality Street no effort was made to combine this feature with the architecture of the period, although the architecture itself was fairly accurate.

Some study might be given to the best method of presenting casts on the screen. The usual method is to say, "Carl Brockhagen—Jack Mulhall." If you know Jack Mulhall it makes no difference, but if you don't know him, which, in theory, is the reason for naming him, how can you pick him out when the only guide you have is the fact that he is playing "Carl Brockhagen"? If the cast showed, "the chauffeur—Jack Mulhall", you would know him the moment you saw his uniform and you would not care whether his name was Tom, Dick or Harry. Likewise "the old man", "the girl", "the judge", "the jockey" would mean something, whereas listing them only by the names of the characters means nothing whatever.

THE Spectator's second birthday comes in March. At that time we will have some bound volumes containing copies of each Spectator published during its second year. The volumes will be rich looking ones bound in half Morocco, and will look well on any library shelf. They will sell for ten dollars each. We intend to bind only those that are ordered in advance. If you wish to secure one please notify us. You may telephone HEmpstead 2801 and give us your order. We will deliver your copy in March and send you a bill for it some time later. Or you can take a chance and send a check with your order.

QUALITY Street has one shot in it that is decidedly novel. Marion Davies converses with Conrad Nagel through a half open door. A door in that position is sep-

arated from its frame by a crack, and all we see of Conrad is what we can glimpse through the crack. It informs us that he is there, and Director Sidney Franklin leaves it to our imaginations to supply his reaction to what Marion is saying. It is refreshing and adequate, and saves the scene from being broken into a succession of close-ups. We should have more exhibitions of that sort of technic.

THERE is a peculiar mistake in The Jazz Singer. In an early sequence Warner Oland, as a Jewish Cantor, sings in the presence of his son. After a time lapse during which the son has grown up we see Oland singing again. He then is an old man with white hair. Al Jolson, the son, left home when he was a boy and never saw his father with white hair, but when the son thinks of him there is a dissolve to the father as the old man. If Jolson be shown remembering a scene of his childhood the dissolve should have been to one that he saw, and not to a later one that the audience knows he did not see.

In Colleen Moore's most recent picture, Her Wild Oat she impersonates a French duchess. In all the titles which use the word it is spelled in the French way, "duchesse", even though the titles are spoken by Americans. The spelling is wrong. There is no more reason for showing an American saying "there is the duchesse" than there is for showing him saying, "there is the femme," when he means, "there is the woman," or "there is the pain," when he means, "there is the bread." We have English words for "duchesse", "femme" and "pain", and when we speak English we use them.

A FEW Spectators ago I asked why producers did not put more colored artists in their pictures. I argued that they are popular. A few weeks ago I sat through an Orpheum show in which every act was greeted enthusiastically by the packed house. The reception accorded Bill Robinson, a colored artist, amounted to an ovation. Recently on the screen I have seen two colored comedians who should not be lost sight of. I don't know what their names are, but the films gave them as Blue Washington and Steppin Fetchit.

A LABEL on a newspaper in Man, Woman, and Sin, a Metro picture starring John Gilbert, reads "American Embassy, Shanghai". There is no American embassy in Shanghai. There is no American embassy any place in the world. There are some United States embassies scat-

ALEXANDER MARKY

ON THE WAY TO SOMEWHERE IN THE PACIFIC

TO DIRECT

For Universal
Written and Prepared by Himself

On His Staff

LEW COLLINS HAROLD I. SMITH WILFRID M. CLINE ZOE VARNEY tered around, but they are confined to capitals. To place an embassy in Shanghai is as ridiculous as placing the British embassy in this country in Seattle. I can't understand how studios do such asinine things.

ONE title in Get Your Man reads, "Now, isn't that sweet!" The punctuation mark at the end classifies the remark as an affirmative exclamation. It isn't. It is a question, and it gets all its value from the fact that it is. It should have ended with an interrogation mark. Invariably, however, it appears on the screen as it does in the Clara Bow picture. It is one of the senseless things that all title writers do.

OCCASIONALLY we see a close-up of a man's legs beside a chair, and then see him sink into the chair, which brings the upper part of his body into the close-up. Will some close-up hound kindly tell me why we are shown his legs before he sits down? What kind of technic is it? Perhaps the person responsible for it realizes that

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Writer

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By

HARRY O. HOYT

most close-ups are insane anyway and that a few of them should have as much insanity as possible in them.

A PICTURE which I saw the other night contained two shots, in each of which there was a taxicab with "Yellow Taxicab Company" in large letters on it. In the daylight shot the taxi was black and in a night shot it was grey. Until we make all our pictures in color, as we will some day, it might be well to omit the signs designating the complexion of the taxis. A black or grey taxi is not yellow, and can not be made so by a sign.

THE Spectator and several Eastern publications have rated Jean Hersholt's performance in Old Heidelberg as the greatest of 1927, yet not in one line of advertising that Metro has put out has Jean's name been used. He is not under contract to Metro, which reasons that it would not be good business to boost him. It's funny reasoning—but it's a funny business.

THIS is the way a title reads in French Dressing: "A table, if you please?" Whenever I criticize the punctuation of titles I am reminded by various correspondents that the screen has a language of its own. Will one of the champions of this language please write me and explain what the question mark is doing at the end of that title?

WHEN The Gaucho opened at Sid Grauman's Chinese Theatre I published a prediction that it would run fourteen weeks. It ran just fourteen weeks.

ALMOST HUMAN

By GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN

Recent dog pictures by De Mille demonstrate that a lavish display of female pulchritude or of a handsome hero battling to save the old homestead are not nearly such essential adjuncts to pictures as we have been taught to believe. We find that it is the humbler aspects of life: those things nearest to our own experiences or inherited predilections which interest us most—even the dog. Here we have a theme, whose actors through a lifetime of association and inherited

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traditions are inseparably interwoven with our own lives; more particularly those parts of them where the trails were rough, and affection and loyalty were accorded their true mead of appreciation. A part of the very fibre of our being are the joys of Adversity's trails, and nothing so plays upon the heart-strings as the understandable trifles which call them to mind.

It is easy to understand why dog pictures are of such general interest. The steadfast loyalty and affection of the dog, alone, is a sufficient reason. No matter how degraded a man may become his dog is unvarying in his devotion. Indeed, misfortune seems to strengthen the bond of fellowship. Why is this so? Has the dog some super sense of perception whereby he can discern qualities none else may see? We speak of dogs sometimes as "almost human". If a dog has this super-sense should it not be an honor to say of a man of broad sympathies that he is "almost canine"? At any rate the term "dog" should not be used opprobriously, for, of all the animals, he is the most intelligent, the most affectionate, the most loyal: qualities whose aggregate might be expressed comprehensively by the term "soul".

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FILMS OF THE FUTURE

By WALTER KRON

A S FAR as the producer is concerned, the film drama is a factory output, sealed like a tomato can. To them, it is a problem in arithmetic — one that assails all makers of products from sausages to reversible neckties

reversible neckties.

Actors like Jannings and Chaplin have been labeled artists by wet-eared gentry. No actor, however great, can be honestly defined in that term, as they lack the creative ability of the artist. The feeling of the artist is never in a puppet, who is little removed from a singer of songs. The actor is but the speaking tube of a creative artist.

The motion picture is a step-brother to the visual arts. Like painting and sculpturing, its possibilities have not even been scratched by all the master minds since its discovery.

To give the devil his due, we will say that F. W. Murnau is one director with an impulse of artistic sincerity in his heart and head. To me, he is all a director should be in The Last Laugh, as fine and great a picture as was ever made. He exposed the utterly selfish heart of all of us with the dexterity of a surgeon. It was a picture far too matured for a dense public; it lacked all requirements for the ingredients of a producer picture; it started the American director in search of elusive camera angles.

In this search they have failed. They do not realize that an angle is used chiefly to bring to the spectator a note of reality, that it should balance with action, and that behind it there should be the same aesthetic urge as light and shade. The angle is far from a mere mechanical idea; it is a material for expression.

The producers' demand to the director is not to reveal existence; it is to exalt it. The bad man of the screen is not a half-bad person; he is superbad. The hero is not a gullible wenchsaver; he is a super-six hero. The college man is not a plain student; he is the insignia of a college. He must affect the emblem and swank of the proletariat's idea of a college. To be subtle in suggestion is not the business of the director. He must hit the mental apparatus of his audience with the report of a howitzer. The peasantry and the city man must grasp everything at the first unreeling. Hence the popularity of the estimable Tom Mix.

The task of a director is easier than that of a third-rate painter, as the latter enlightened craftsman not only poses his subjects, but endures the tedious labor of painting them. Inspiration is a fleeting thing that lingers but little with us mortals, and for a painter to nurse it is doubly hard.

The motion picture, by its immensity and circulation holds the amateur in awe; he thinks immediately of the tremendous cost of its materials. A day will come when Hollywood will find competition springing from a group, perhaps in Walla Walla, Washington, Fort Worth, Texas; or Hartford, Connecticut. Productions will spring from these centers that will knock Hollywood producers off their smug platforms. At least, this is a pleasant thought. What would cost a film maker fifty thousand dollars to produce, some young genius, armed with the zeal of his ego, will be able to make for a few thousand. I have learned of late that this surprise has recently taken place in artificial Hollywood. The picture is called The Last Moment.

Picture-making is to-day a common thing over the land. Many haphazard news reels show as good photography as the so-called better pictures.

The Lord knows the lowly movie has been hammered often; its main cogs have been the subject of abuse by scores of writers. Its faults are glowingly obvious and its possibilities unexplored. If the executive producer has the aptitude for picking out directors and stories of questionable worth slightly higher than a commercial grade, Vanity Fair finds a place for him in its Hall of Fame. Of this we have no quarrel, nor are we surprised that the man who made the King of Kings is a money lender in modern clothes.

Clever quackery is abundant. The sincere fellows are readily discovered, but they can not thrive in the deadening atmosphere surrounding Hollywood. Sure death is bound to overtake them. Gentlemen, like F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Carl Van Vechten, have come to Hollywood only to leave it in open disgust. If these aesthetes hold their noses, what chance has inquiring youth? Jim Tully writes his portraits of the film great with a club, and his disdain is genuine.

The film play is nothing but a story told in a series of pictures. The formula moves ahead and becomes intricate, but the ideas are primarily similar. We all know the pure girl will be saved from rape, and that the hero will get the last pot shot at the cringing villain. But our young novice (still to arise), will, no doubt, throw all these ready-made props overboard. He will begin with the story, perhaps of a family, a young man, a young girl, or a husband, sick of the shackles of a dull wife. He will show us the raw shadows, reminding us of a "Bellow's lithograph". The true character will emerge in all his abject postureshis fat greasy smirking at the suc-cess of a venture. The black heart of humanity will be revealed. Our handsome hero will not exactly be introduced in a latrine, but he will depict many of the repulsive postures that most heroes are subject to. Some, at least, might squeeze a pimple or the heroine might examine a boil on her

husband's or sweetheart's neck, but to expose characters in moments of ungrace or petty physical tortures would not be absolutely necessary. Dostoievsky and Zola have handled this in the novel too well.

The aim of the young aspirant is to show the expression of feature and carriage in relation to environment. The spectacle of the human field is unlimited. The interior of a subway, a street car, or the vapid expression of a baseball fan. These masses of faces and bodies we meet daily. Their movements are all in routine, a tragic cadence; their sweat is the essence of all drama.

Locales for production are always available. Natural interiors are preferable. Kliegs for lighting can be rented. Our young genius has his feeling for design and shade of his background and the postures of the actors. With his materials ready, he needs but to get to work.

I do not mean to imply any amateur, but it can and will be done by some unknown or many unknowns of budding ambition. When they do arise, the Goldwyns, Zukors, and Laskys will gobble them up, pollute them with fat salaries, and then reduce them to swine.

This condition in the affairs of films is certain to come. The film drama is a simple affair and far from being the mysterious business some think it is. The distribution of the finished picture would be its main difficulty. The little theatre idea in the film realm is yet to be realized. The director of such a film would tell his story in action, and the narration of the tale could be objective or through the eyes of the characters.

The power of the camera is now being utilized by a flock of servile pygmies. A director to-day thinks in terms of box-office, a comely blonde, his taxes, or the price of a Hispano-Suiza. Life in its movement, its topsy turvy imbecilities, is an element to him found only in books.

"If dogs have a public—and it is a fact that police hounds with the personality of a Rin Tin Tin hold a following comparable to the best Western stars,—their histrionic ability cannot be disputed," Mr. Harry Rapf, producer for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, states in the boot-licking "Hollywood Vagabond" on his new wonder dog, Flash.

The mentality of this animal I believe has something to do with his screen personality, a deep thinker usually has amongst human kind a sort of aura of personality that impresses itself on one. Why should not an extremely intelligent dog have the same influence?

It is at least true that among all we have seen, personality and super-intelligence are combined in the only dog I think suitable for stardom.

So, producer Rapf evidently is not handicapped in his search for intelligence. If Tillie the Toiler can be

humanized, why not a dog? Who will question the ability of Felix the cat, one of the real entertaining clowns in the business? His adventures are great and more original than most

screen stories.

While priding myself on having intellect equal to a bootblack, a scenario writer or a street car conductor, I must confess Felix has satisfied me as a screen actor. Felix can do more with his tail than Doug Fairbanks with a bull whip; John Gilbert using a cape as a parachute can not compare with Felix.

This magnetic Feline has everything, agility, coyness, personality, horsemanship and grace—what more can the fans ask for? I do not say this with a superior snicker, but in

dead earnest.

His creator deserves a bow in Vanity Fair's hall of fame; this is said with no disrespect to that notable periodical, which is far and above first

The cinema-makers of England are of no importance; such civilized countries as Sweden, Italy and France produce little of value to the respect of mankind. They give us the same routine slush that we have at home.

Germany has come nearer to saying something with a camera than all

foreign nations.

It is said that UFA is now in the hands of German bankers of the Babbit ilk. If such be the case we can expect little or nothing of importance from them. They will no doubt flee the terrors of their soul and serve unadulterated bilge, cocaine for the brain; this is, has, and always will be a good seller. To decry this fact is to moan in the

wilderness; the apparent emptiness of the human brain and heart is one of

the colossal wills of God.

The folly of trying to make this aright, I leave to men of more artistic might. I speak my piece and, Allah be praised, one must endure the unendurable.

trasting flashes of puppies or rabbits, his legion of imitators have sat up nights inventing elaborate expedients of a similar kind to be finally presented as nothing short of divertissements. Charming irrelevancies, ranging from camels to cracked ice were ushered in to stupefy audiences. A new era of symbols dawned. Some proved effective; the majority distracting. This creeping in of the un-expected was nicely timed with the

mainly of surprising eye-food rather than brain stimulant. They have been

groping in a maze of uncertainty and

reflected splendors, whose source has

As an instance of stylistic folly, ever since Griffith in 1915 injected con-

seldom been perceived.

first great cut-back wave, which nearly made us a clairvoyant race. Here the precepts of Aeschylus were due for their initial overhauling.

It is an elementary fact that the prime essentials for a stage drama are also those for a film drama. Despite the nonsense about new scenes and characters being more important than "conflict", as sure as the Avon flows on "the plot is the thing", and if it is not unreeled as progressively as the film itself weakness results. Most of our touted epics of to-day are a series of peaks with no valleys between, and the willing imagination is asked to jump from summit to summit without pause. After about two jumps the imagination balks. It's almost time that some of the astute coaches, who are so intent on turning experienced actors into puppets, learn when to show rabbits.

In order to develop the rise and fall of action in film drama it is evident that production methods must first be improved. With half a dozen conflicting ideas on the proper treatment of a story, with as many directors and assistants mauling the play and its people day by day, artistic and inspired work is almost impossible. Collaboration of any kind needs guidance, and it is best that one superior mind plan and control the undertak-

WHEN TO SHOW RABBITS

By GEORGE TURNER

N era of impressionism in motion pictures seems about to give way to a new and greater era of realism, if we may judge by a number of recent film successes. Certain directors have apparently learned a lesson from Seventh Heaven, namely, that the "unities of the drama" apply to the screen as well as to the stage.

It has at last dawned upon experimenters that to capture the imagination is one thing and to hold it is an entirely different process. Although Greek dramatists discovered the difference centuries ago, it remained for Hollywood to squander millions of dollars on disappointed drama in an effort to recreate human fancy.

Since Seventh Heaven there is cause for optimism. The luck of seven has not deserted us. Seven Keys to Baldpate ushered in more than a decade of mystery plays; Seventh Heaven seems destined to elucidate finally the mystery of keeping an audience interested. No longer, perhaps, are we to be intrigued by "super-productions" made up of a string of sensational shots, each so climactic as to entirely obstruct or nullify any real climax, for the elusive and diabolical secret of holding attention has been caught and handcuffed.

Hitting the high spots has been the curse of the movies for years. Directors have been so intent on putting everything over on the aggregated dub public, and incidentally displaying their esoteric knowledge of picture psychology, that they have disregarded all rules of contrast. No doubt there has seemed little importance in the principle of the "rise and fall", that rhythm of recital long ago found to be the very breath of life to art. So wary of minor details have these gentlemen become, furthermore, that most pictures have held disappoint-

ments in the way of omitted or aberrant scenes. Imagination has been sidetracked by improprieties, and sympathy with the characters checked by unsatisfying resolutions and denouements.

The lack of vitality in screen stories is declared in the studios to be mainly the fault of the writers. However great their shortcomings, it is evident that to adjust narrative to the patterns demanded by directors of the class alluded to is distasteful, futile and almost impossible for any writer, experienced or otherwise. The present mal-relationship between the pen and the megaphone is due to weak and flabby studio standards.

Directors who are disciples of the "head-line" style of treatment are themselves to be counted among the martyrs, for those who survive will go down before the progressives who comprehend the lesson of Seventh Heaven and others like it and are prepared to go forth and do likewise. Yielding to the fear of losing their jobs over night, the former have calculated in the daily rushes to fascinate their managements through a perpetual display of ingenuity. A big punch in every scene! Look what I can do with that writer guy's stuff! The most iron-clad continuities are not proof against this brilliance. These captains of the high lights and lens impressionists have been trying to mold Venuses out of an assortment of eyes and legs. Offer them a backbone and see what happens.

The crowning absurdity of the films has been the spotted rash of "big scenes", for which serials are con-spicuous. The reason for the high spot plague has been a stupid misapprehension as to what constitutes the sensational. Producers have been led to think that the sensational consists

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WHAT DO THEY WANT?

By ROSS B. WILLS

N a recent Spectator a well known scenarist interestingly heralds a viewpoint that lately seems to be gaining a curious prevalence. To wit: that the American public, weaned at last from the sugar-teat of the hydrabodied Cinderella Saga, has suddenly burst from its swaddling clothes, put on long pants, and begun to bellow loudly for brittler feed; that it is going hog-wild not merely for the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, but insists on the true whether it is beautiful or not, or it will even, Spartan-like, forego its conception of the beautiful if it may wallow in the real Bourbon -the good, old, horny-handed, seamyfaced, hew-to-the-line "Grim Realism"; and that, finally, we may all collapse with surprise if, henceforth, the public deigns to accept anything milder for its movies than literal picturizations of the harsher cases out of Krafft-Ebbing.

Now, though it is apparent in his letter that the above-mentioned scenarist, Robert N. Lee, is scarcely so extreme as in the final instance, it is even plainer that he is at least a conservative member of that growing and optimistic company whose several viewpoints range over the whole catalogue. I lately argued for six hours with a very intelligent writer whose viewpoint on the subject was scarcely distinguishable from that set down as the most extreme case. Some of their arguments are interesting, and even momentarily compelling, but a calm and solemn search fails to present any evidence worth a hoot to support the general contention.

Perhaps it can be shown that there is a little improvement in the artistic goods that the public will accept. But, granting that little, let us not forget to observe that "what the public will accept" and "the public's taste" are horses of radically different hues; and let us also cast a suspicious eye toward the highly efficient and shrewdly apt business of advertising. Then, surely, to do more than merely mention the words "movie advertising" in a phlebotomy on the public and the movies is to be absurdly superfluous. Or, in politics, the name Coolidge. Or, in general, the varied masterpieces that roar over the radio.

But, since Mr. Lee sticks exclusively to the movies in documenting his general contention, I shall follow him there. It would be almost indecent, anyhow, to drag such a dreadful herring as Exhibit "A", Abie's Irish Rose, into an argument over the American public's taste in, for one thing, the

"Grimness," says Mr. Lee, "has scored to a remarkable degree." And he goes on to say that public attention is now focused on realism instead of on "saccharine stuff"; and that

realism, not only in the whole art realm but particularly in the movies, is now supreme. And to demonstrate, he lists the following pictures, which, he plainly implies the public has gone wild over largely because of their grimness": Seventh Heaven, Barbed Wire, Way of All Flesh, Flesh and the Devil, Underworld, Beau Geste, etc.

Now, that these very creditable pictures have won the enthusiasm of the public is, indeed, a source of just pleasure to the Hollywood Intelligentzia; but to ascribe their popularity in the very least notably to their qualities of grimness is to excite considerable wonder that, say, The Scientific Monthly and Revue des Deux-Mondes are not favored equally with Popular Science and Liberty. Even if, as I presume, Mr. Lee means grim realism in its highest sense, and even if these pictures all show relatively high, or even surprising, intelligence, it is modestly suggested that any of their grim qualities had no more (and probably not as much) to do with their success than their comedy, which is no more than any part ever should have to do with the success of a whole. But perhaps Mr. Lee insists that these pictures are themselves dominatingly grim, that their stories essentially, and their treatment, are grimly realistic to a fare-ye-well?

Consider Beau Geste. That truly grim episode in which Noah Beery so stoutly defends his fort? Magnificent! Gripping! But don't forget the motif which wove the whole together, and was always dominant—the manly, charming affection between the three brothers, whose performances made that dominating motif surely no more grim than three kittens in a basket, or than such an affection between

such brothers usually is.

But of all odd illustrations-Seventh Heaven! Possibly we may call this realistic, in the sense that it was made relatively plausible, but even so, then surely whatever realism it had was of the veriest unimportance. The basic story was only a trite, sentimental piece of limburger. Is it at all important or significant to the world to know how a sewer-swipe rises to the majesty of a street-cleaner, and that he rescues a charming baggage from unwilling prostitution, and that a deep love grows between them? So much for realism. But to call this picture at all grim, then St. Francis of Assisi was really Friedrich Nietzsche! It is scarcely absurd to hazard that, had the story had ordinary direction, or a lesser "Diane", it must surely have melted on its first screen and drowned the whole orchestra in syrup. It happened, however, to be raised to a tremendous dignity, and made a charming and affecting piece of entertainment almost wholly because of Miss Gaynor's "Diane", not to forget its fine direction.

Did the public storm Flesh and the Devil because it lusted for grim realism, or because it anticipated a titillating "kick" from the gorgeous love duet of the tempting Garbo and the dashing Mons. Gilbert? So is "Nuit de Noel" grim!

Now, I'll hazard the guess that the public is not a bit more interested in grim realism, if it be at all cognizant of it, than it is in grim comedy or grim fantasy, or in realistic comedy or in just plain, every-day, unadulterated realism; but that it is almost wholly interested in entertainment, regardless of its garb, and that it will take an entertaining picture and applaud it even if it happens, accidentally or otherwise, to be intelligent. And it is further hazarded that the best way to achieve entertaining pictures, which are also intelligent, is simply to be honest in producing them. Which simply means: give each character what he demands, and give each scene what it demands—only that and nothing more, and it is everything.

In conclusion, I wind up and hurl vigorously at Mr. Lee and his cohorts Sunrise! There is a picture of grimness all compact, and almost entirely unrelieved; the public ought to eat it up, it should outdo The Big Parade. We'll wait and watch the public reaction . . . and then, maybe, Mr. Lee may be able to shoot that astonishing picture right back at me. If he can, there'll follow a very sporting exhibition of hat-doffing.

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DEEP WATERS

By JAMES BRANT

Newport Beach, California.

My dear Beaton:
EEP water has a charm that is all Dits own, a mood, a meaning or an inspiration. It will sing you a melody or a tumult along its shore line, bore you to utter depression with monotonous, rippleless calm or scare you out of a thousand heartbeats with a hurricane tempest. It holds within itself a million mysteries as yet unsolved, and its surface is a medium of commerce, a playground for pleasure and a battleground of piracy, conquest

and smuggling activity.

That deep water can unfold many a harrowing tale of suffering and brutal outrage is not its fault so much as it is the fault of those who use it wrongly or unthinkingly. Some time, when everything is just plain hell, go down and let it sing you a song of promise, or if, perchance, you are sitting pretty on the top of the world with your legs a-hanging over and the old pipe serenely smoking, take a little auxiliary and tackle a row of greybeards. Old Ocean is a great leveler and is a prophylactic and therapeutic not to be despised.

The theatre for centuries has been commonly referred to as an art and an entertainment and it has been generally understood and decreed that a theatrical presentation must be solely an artistic entertainment, and must in no sense teach, preach or educate. Old stuff and mostly bunk.

The theatre is an educational institution. Motion pictures, in particular, exert an influence on the public mind not to be underestimated and have a potential educational value that is practically unlimited. The story, every act of the principals, even the lights, the shadows and the music have some certain influence on the minds of the spectators, and that influence enters into the social, political and business life of the nation.

That motion pictures have been the medium of secret exhibitions of filthy sexuality and public exhibitions of coarseness and suggestive sensuality is no more the fault of motion pictures than piracy on the high seas is the fault of Old Ocean, nor is there any more reason to approve and permit such exhibitions than there is to approve and permit

piracy.

To be educational it is not necessary that picture plays should be cutand-dried-Sunday - School-hymn - book affairs. Everybody likes a good joke and a little fun, even diseased minds, and the educational value in such plays is that they lift the looker out of himself and he gets a clearer perspective of the day ahead. Those plays that embody, in whole or in part, the filth and the slime of the tenement gutter, a coarse and vulgar habit or practice, or suggestive sensuality, are a direct and exact reflection of the

minds of the producers and in view of the educational force that the screen exerts it is a matter for public consideration whether such producers should be permitted to continue their activities. Such plays are neither elevating nor interesting; they are just sordid. They exert a backward influ-ence in that they incite the minds of the spectators to a contemplation of subjects and practices of a low order instead of to ideals of refinement and culture.

The freedom of the press must not be curtailed. That is the cry of all the publishers, editors and writers in creation. Exactly so and very true. But freedom becomes unbridled license, what then? The art of the motion picture must not be hampered or censored; it must be free to achieve its glorious destiny. Very fine senti-ment and true enough. But when art becomes fulsome and depraved, then what? I do not know, neither do I particularly care, how artists, critics, and others interested define art, but between the two of us, true art is the rhythmic expression of truth. Take it any way you like. Music, the rhythm of sound. Literature, the cadence of words. Sculpture, the rhythmic sequence and blending of lines. Motion, a standard-bred trotter in action. Art to be real must be true and express truth, either directly or indirectly, by implication or inference, allegory or metaphor. A rich comedy is art, but I hope to starve to death if I have ever been able to locate the art in a custard pie, except in its making.

When a picture play fails to exert something of benefit, something that is true and worth while, and has no value other than a monetary one, it is not art by my definition and becomes something else, and only the Prophets, Buddha or Allah, could properly define some of the produc-

FROM AN EXHIBITOR

Dear Sir:

It is with pleasure that I have received the last two or three copies of

The Film Spectator.

An independent trade paper such as The Spectator should be a great treat to any exhibitor, for we exhibitors well know where the blame lies concerning the moving picture business of today. That producers should be

allowed to coerce and ruin actors, writers and directors, on one side, and endeavor to do the same with exhibitors on the other, is a thing that any-one identified with the moving picture business should be ashamed to allow

It is my sincere wish that the actors will win out in their fight and I am sure that the majority of independent exhibitors feel likewise, for we realize that it isn't the fault of the actors as a whole that it costs so much to produce a picture, and then pay what we are charged for it, but rather that the big producers must make the big haul.

It is too bad that the Federal Trade Commission couldn't get after the pro-ducers for the actors' benefit. Personally we aren't bothered very much by the producers as we only play a limited amount of pictures in a year and only buy them on a selective basis, and from whom we choose. Still we object to seeing a hold-up game pulled off under the guise of the law and the film board of trade.

I think you have taken the right step in trying to get the exhibitors interested, and I wish you and the actors success in your fight.

G. M. LOUNSBERY, Grand Gorge, N. Y.

Eugene Brewster, in his entertaining and clever Screen Tattler, says: "While Welford Beaton has not said it in so many words, reading between the lines, I find my own opinions confirmed that the chief fault with the movies lies with the management." I have referred to Louis B. Mayer as "a ranting, wild eyed, incompetent". I wish Eugene would run over sometime and tell me how I could have written it to make it unnecessary for anyone to read between the lines to grasp what I was trying to say.

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(REPRINTED FROM THE SPECTATOR OF NOVEMBER 12, 1927)

To those engaged in the creative branches of screen art

HAVE been doing, and I will continue to do, what little I can to bring about reforms in the motion picture industry that will improve your condition, make you happier in your work, and increase your earning power. I am advocating these reforms because I believe in them, not to make things better for you. But it so happens that my policy and your interests are identical, and as I have no material interest in the outcome of the campaign, you will be the sole beneficiaries of anything that we may accomplish together.

Those whose policies I have been called upon to oppose are making it as difficult as possible for The Spectator to continue to exist. They have promised that they will put it out of business, and as far as I know it is the only one of their promises that they are making a diligent effort to keep.

If on The Spectator's paid subscription list there were the names of five thousand exhibitors, the paper would be able to laugh at any efforts to destroy it. Its voice would be heeded, and it would be a valuable friend to you.

I do not command the money to meet the expense of a campaign to secure five thousand exhibitor subscribers. I see no way of obtaining it.

Will five hundred of you, whose interests are at stake, subscribe to ten copies each that I may send to exhibitors with your compliments? It will cost each of you fifty dollars, which will be an investment in your own welfare.

This proposal to the personnel of the industry is made at the suggestion, and upon the advice, of twenty leading screen people, three of whom brought the idea to me, and the rest of whom gave it their earnest support. The first plan was to make a quiet canvass without publicity, but I preferred this method.

Welford Beaton

Tear the Coupon off and Mail it.

Write your name and address plainly.

WELFORD BEATON, 7213 SUNSET BOULEVARD, HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA

Put my name down and send me a bill for fifty dollars, together with the names of the ten exhibitors who will receive my yearly subscriptions.

(Article by, and Published for, "S. S.")

Heart-Appeal Pictures Stimulate B. O. Health

HERE is no escaping the fact that the truest art I is that which appeals directly to the heart. Beauty is a pulse-quickener. Translated to motion picture forms art lies not in the neo-camera technic nor in tortuous symbolism, but in clothing of entertainment in a garb of beauty, of inspiration, of ocular and spiritual joy. There is an undoubted esthetic quality conveyed to the screen by such directors as King Vidor, F. W. Murnau, Clarence Brown, W. K. Howard, Josef von Sternberg, Frank Urson and a few others who achieve this result regardless of materials. Howard did it with a drab White Gold and the pugilistic Main Event; Von Sternberg with such crass melodrama as Underworld, Urson with the much-discussed Chicago and his unique Almost There comes now a new figure in the group of directorial progressives who can breathe into formula material the essence of beauty and a feeling individual with the creative artist. This man is Albert Rogell, a twenty-six-year-old director who was "brought up on the bottle" of outdoor pictures. He has taken a Harold Bell Wright yarn and infused into it an originality and significance that make for a superior product. He has aimed it directly for the masses; it has in superlative degree what the "Boys of the Box Office" call "heart-appeal". Yet it possesses both intellect and charm in its treatment. Of course, heart appeal may be inherent in a story, but only a director with emotional capacity and ability to get this quality on the screen can obtain enthusiastic reactions from his audiences, both "paying" and critical. Rogell evidently has long been ready for the making of specials-and a long apprenticeship in the filming of Fred Thomson and Ken Maynard program moneymakers has neither warped his sense of humor nor shortened his vision. The Shepherd of the Hills, at Loew's State Theatre, Los Angeles, in its world premiere, was greeted by extraordinary activity at the b. o. (which grew as the result of wordof-mouth advertising) and critical acclaim as a directorial triumph.

Louella Parsons Writes Glowingly of Rogell

LOUELLA O. Parsons, whose critiques and comment are religiously read by and influence the "shopping tastes" of millions of fans, glowingly reviewed The Shepherd of the Hills under the heading, "Shepherd of Hills Stirs Heart Throbs at Loew's". Of Albert Rogell she wrote, with a note of critical approbation: "Albert Rogell, the director, has produced the story with fine feeling. He must have really had sympathy with Mr. Wright's characters to have

presented them with so much understanding." Yet one would scarcely expect Miss Parsons, the sophisticated critic who has observed and pushed forward the development of the movie since she dealt with the industry from her desk on the Chicago Herald in 1916, through her years on the New York Morning Telegraph to her current editorship of Hearst's Universal Service movie department, to print a "rave" on the production of a Harold Bell Wright story. For, while Wright certainly writes for a tremendous public, his sympathizers do not include the critical elite. Hence Miss Parsons' reaction is unusually significant.

Young "Times" Critic Reacts to Sincerity

YOUNG Marquis Busby, whose deft and discerning reviews for the Los Angeles Times have added to the popularity of Edwin Schallert's department, reacts promptly to evidences of creative sincerity in picture-making. So, in his comment upon The Shepherd of the Hills he noted that "Albert Rogell has maintained throughout a deep spiritual feeling. Perhaps the note of sincerity is the outstanding feature of the film. Rogell, in his first directorial assignment of marked importance, shows a remarkable sense of dramatic values. The Shepherd of the Hills has been brought to the screen with singular charm and effectiveness." Busby believes that the picture is a "surprise". He has said so, explaining that the "hoke" element expected in a production of this type has fled before a directorial treatment so sensitive and so well shaded as to bring into relief the thematic values of faith—the motif of the play. Ray Murray, of the Exhibitors' Herald, a critic of the hardshell school, claims it is "thrillingly beautiful, a reflection of Rogell's intense directorial enthusiasm." Nick M. Carey, of The Record staff, sees that "restraint and simplicity mark the characterizations". He says Rogell has "admirably told" the Ozark tale—and that is the director's fundamental business, to tell his story well. Jimmy Starr, the brilliant youngster who edits—and is— Cinematters, pointed out, in an editorial review of The Shepherd of the Hills what handicaps Rogell overcame in the making of the picture and summed up the director's success as "a triumph of American youth." Rogell is now making another Ken Maynard vehicle. He is under contract to Charles R. Rogers until October, and Rogers is producing the Maynard series. With scarcely a week ever granted him between pictures Albert Rogell has been making commercial program hits since he was eighteen, then an entrant in the motion picture directorial sweepstakes. There should be a "degree" for a director so consistent to type. Say Albert Rogell, B. O. D. The B. O. D., of course, represents "Box-Office Director".

Edited by WELFORD BEATON

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No. 13

Shutting down studios foolish business move

Producers do not cultivate loyalty of employees

Our compliments to the Fox organization

Is art of acting coming into its own?

Reviews by the Editor

PATENT LEATHER KID SORRELL AND SON SADIE THOMPSON DRUMS OF LOVE

NO PLACE TO GO FEEL MY PULSE DOOMSDAY **GORILLA**

Reviews by Donald Beaton

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I see by a New York paper that

AL COHN

is writing an adaptation of The Butter and Egg Man. Don't know anything about it myself. PAUL SCHOFIELD

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He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill.—Burke.

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF., FEBRUARY 18, 1928

It is a False Idea That Film Business Is Unlike All Others

OTION picture producers are business men. They acknowledge it. They laugh at you when you talk of screen art, and point to their huge fortunes as proof of the soundness of their business sense. They have managed to build up one of the most gigantic industries on earth, but in the process have not learned what kind of business it is. They tell you that the rules that have made other businesses successful can not be applied to the production of pictures, but I have not found one of them who can give an intelligent reason for such an assertion. I once said in The Spectator that I could not see any fundamental difference between making pictures and making pianos, and several of my producer acquaintances told me that I was crazy. The other day I was discussing the picture business with C. E. Sullivan, one of the capable young businessmen with whom Joseph P. Kennedy is surrounding himself and who are making F.B.O. perhaps the best run producing organization in the business. Until two years ago Sullivan was an engineer, and knew nothing about pictures, but Kennedy gave him an important executive job and as he still holds it I presume he is making good. All that Sullivan brought to his new work was a business mind. In answer to a question he told me that thus far in the picture game he has found no business problem that had not been paralleled many times in the engineering business. The details, he said, were different, but the underlying principles were the same and the solution of a picture problem was nothing but a modification or a variation of the solution of some problem with which he had dealt before getting into pictures. This is exactly what I have

IN THE NEXT SPECTATOR

Some arguments tending to show that screen art is stagnant.

Reference to the fact that The Spectator celebrates its second birthday.

Reviews of Skyscraper, London After Midnight, The Chaser, Spring Fever, Her Mad Hour, Foreign Legion, Love, Secret Hour, Midnight Madness, Honeymoon Flats, Wings, The Czarina's Secret.

been contending. All business is selling something for a price. To warrant the price a standard consistent with it must be maintained. The profit is the difference between the expense of maintaining the standard and what the product brings in the open market. It follows, therefore, that the smaller the expense, the greater the profit. Motion picture producers can grasp that point, which is elemental enough even for them, and they are seeking ways to reduce the expense. Any saving that they can effect becomes profit only when it does not decrease the quality of their product. If in reducing the cost of a picture by one dollar they so reduce its quality that they must sell it for one dollar less, they are at a standstill. They still hold to the belief that they can save money by reducing salaries. If they used what God gave them to think with, they would realize that no industrial organization in the world ever increased earnings by decreasing morale. There is no evidence in industrial history of a wholesale and horizontal cut in salaries contributing pomanently to the prosperity of a concern. No salary ever should be cut to the measure of a man's usefulness to his employer. If he can not earn the salary, the employer should find someone who can. The salaries paid to motion picture executives—even Louis B. Mayer's eight hundred thousand a year-become ridiculous only when we contemplate those who are receiving them. There has been no suggestion that these salaries should be reduced, and I do not think they should. But those to whom they are paid should be replaced by people who can earn them. If this were done, production costs would come down without a single salary being cut. What pictures need is better brains for the money it is spending, not the same brains for less money.

How Not to Run a Picture Organization

THE Warner brothers have an extraordinary way of decreasing expenses. They do it—or think they're doing it—by wrecking their organization. Closing their studio for two months, during which they turn loose all those working for them and who they think will work

THE COUNTRY BEYOND

By GEORGE F. MAGOFFIN

There is in each picture potential allure.
There some time will be one—of this I am sure—So true to the instincts of each human breast
We'll acclaim it with fervor, forgiving the rest.

This thought gives us courage to endure on and on Through the mad movie morass to the Country Beyond, Where saner procedure in production reveals That which crass assurance and blind ego conceals.

Even now we can glimpse through the miasmic air The sheen of the garments the aureate wear; And sweet to our nostrils—a thing apart From the reek of the morass—the fragrance of Art.

It is this that allures us, not the movies per se; Not what they are now, but what they will be; And we want to be there to salaam to the throne When Artistic Endeavor comes into its own.

In the Country Beyond there's a song and a sigh;
There's a smile on the lip and a tear in the eye;
There is Youth, ardent and joyous; Age, honored and hoary—

It is Artistic Endeavor telling a story.

for them again after the hiatus, is a piece of idiocy, colossal and sublime. Apparently the Warner boys consider that their office fixtures constitute their organization and that if they can keep them intact they can operate efficiently simply by getting someone to sit in front of each desk. Only by possessing a closely knit, efficient and permanent organization can any company earn its potential At no time can anyone working for Warner Brothers feel himself secure in his position, and it is upon a foundation of a feeling of security that efficiency and loyalty can be built. Universal is about as bad as Warner Brothers. For the past couple of years I have watched with interest the growth of a healthy feeling on the Universal lot. Henry Henigson, the general manager, had performed the miracle of ridding the lot of its continual mental turmoil, something that Carl Laemmle seems to have an uncanny knack for creating, and for the first time in the history of the company those who worked for it were giving more attention to the performance of their duties than to the holding of their jobs. Then along came an announcement that the studio was to close for a period, and as I write this no one on the lot is sure of his job. If the business of the company were pounding big rocks until they became little ones, there would be nothing serious in the perturbation of its employees, for a man can pound a rock while his mind is in a turmoil, but to disturb the mental state of people doing mental work is about as insane a thing as an employer can do. On all the other lots the feeling is little better than it is in the Warner and Universal studios. I can not find any organization that radiates an atmosphere of stability. The De Mille lot perhaps comes closest to it, and Watterson Rothacker has introduced a healthier feeling into the First National organization, but on all the other lots everyone seems more concerned with his next job than with the one he is holding. A condition that is both an artistic and an economic drawback to the screen is the lack in all the studios of a feeling of personal loyalty to the men who direct their affairs. At recurrent intervals a feeling of loyalty to Carl Laemmle demonstrates itself on the Universal lot, but before it reaches full bloom something happens to dispel it. Laemmle himself has the quality that would command personal loyalty, but those who advise him do such fool things that it is impossible for him to keep it after he has earned it. The growing consciousness on the Fox lot that it is turning out a series of the greatest pictures ever made in so short a time by any producing organization is engendering a respect for Winfield Sheehan that should develop into a feeling of personal loyalty so strong as to become a valuable asset of the firm. Some years ago Jesse Lasky was in close touch with his employees and they had a feeling of loyalty to him, but the organization has become so great that it has grown away from him and now he virtually is a stranger on the lot. Any man in any industry gets the popularity and loyalty that he earns. It is the fault of the producers themselves that their employees are interested only in themselves, and not in the welfare of the companies that employ them. The bosses are responsible for the distressing condition of the morale. On all the lots money is wasted on a gigantic scale, and the only remedy that the composite producer mind has evolved yet is that the salaries of actors, directors, and writers should be reduced, even though none of the three contributes anything material to the waste.

My Compliments to the Fox Organization

7HAT Price Glory?, Seventh Heaven, Sunrise, Four Sons, The Street Angel, Mother Machree-all among the greatest pictures ever made, and all from the same studio. Hangman's House, The Four Devils and other equally notable ones to come from the same studio, the works of such great directors as Frank Borzage, Jack Ford, and F. W. Murnau. Contemplating such a list of screen triumphs we must credit the Fox production organization with being the most efficient on earth. During the time it took to make these pictures all the other organizations combined did not make such contributions to screen art. I have criticized the Fox organization as a whole and Winfield Sheehan, its head, severely, and I do not retract anything I have said, but I admit that the organization is an amazingly capable one and that Sheehan is the greatest producer in the world. No other conclusion can be drawn. Sheehan is a great producer because he is a great business man. Last summer, when the other studios were demoralizing their morale by cutting salaries in a crazy manner, Sheehan went straight ahead, adding nothing to the turmoil and buying up the brains that the other producers drove from their studios. The result has been a procession of the greatest pictures ever made. While these pictures were appearing, came news of the acquisition by Fox of West Coast Theatres, which gives him control of over five hundred houses, adding to the lustre of being the greatest producer, the distinction of being the greatest exhibitor. Extraordinary as these achievements are, the Fox organization seems just to have started. Even more extraordinary things are planned by Fox and Sheehan. They are young yet, Fox being forty-seven and Sheehan forty-four, and while I know the latter only slightly and the former not at all, I would judge by their accomplishments that they are daring men with the saving grace of caution. How far are they going? On past performances it seems safe to predict that in an astonishingly short time the Fox organization as a producer of motion pictures will be the greatest in point of quantity as it is now in point of quality. The company is founded on a policy that makes expansion automatic. Eighty-five per cent of the profit it makes on pictures this year will be put back into pictures next year. This means that next year Fox will spend on the production of pictures as much money as he spends this year, plus eighty-five per cent of the profits made by the pictures shown this year. When you consider the tremendous money-makers that just have been released, and the others that are to be released, you can get some idea of the great sum that automatically will become available for production on an ascending scale during each succeeding year. The healthy feature of the company's operations is that it considers itself only a producer of pictures, and not primarily an exhibitor. This means that production will be its first thought, which, in turn, means that the procession of Seventh Heaven and such pictures will be unending. Fox eventually will pass Paramount and Metro, for the major concern of these two companies is their theatre investment, which Fox regards as of secondary importance, notwithstanding its gigantic proportions. And Fox is keeping abreast of screen development. The other night I sat for two hours in a projection room and viewed the marvels of

Movietone. It is another thing that Fox just has started. Where are he and Sheehan going, anyway? A few years ago I stood jammed in a crowd at Buckingham Palace, London, endeavoring to watch the colorful change of guard. My view of it was limited. In the projection room in Hollywood I sat in a comfortable easy chair and saw the whole thing, and heard the music of the band. What other miracles is this organization going to perform?

Something About the Art of Acting

AVING passed through almost every other phase, we can look forward with confidence to the screen finally achieving the acting phase. It is a desire to be entertained that takes people to picture houses. It does not matter to them in what form the entertainment comes to them. A good story will entertain them, and good acting will do the same. To advance our argument let us suppose that the thoroughly entertaining picture is made up of fifty per cent story and fifty per cent acting. The audience thereby receives one hundred per cent entertainment, which is what it wants and what the producer must provide. If the story be a weak one that would be but forty per cent of a picture, obviously it is up to the producer to provide sixty per cent of acting to, make up the deficit and to keep the picture up to one hundred per cent. The weaker the story, the stronger must be the acting, and, fortunately, there is enough acting ability in Hollywood to bolster up the weakest story. The trouble at present is that not enough attention is paid to performances. Producers evince a greater desire to secure cheap actors than good ones, although there are plenty of good actors who can be secured for reasonable salaries. Another weakness is that actors are not studied sufficiently by directors. We have the actor whose hands are expressive; another who can put over something best by his facial expression; a third who can do his best work with his whole body, yet the tendency is to make all three of them conform to the director's conception of a certain scene. Close-ups are given of all three, while the only one who should be shown in one is he whose facial expression is his strongest point. Let us suppose that we have in the same cast Lon Chaney, Percy Marmont, Henry B. Walthall, Adolphe Menjou and Charlie Ray. If I were directing the picture I would let Lon Chaney put over his big moments with his face and eyes. Quite often I would shoot Adolphe's back and allow him to use his expressive shoulders, but I would not overlook his eyebrow raising. I would not show Walthall in any close-up that cut out his hands. Take Henry's hands away from him and you rob him of his most effective means of expression. Every shot of Marmont would include his whole body. Percy is restricted somewhat in facial expression, but he has the most expressive body on the screen. I would allow Charlie Ray to use his feet in his big moments. He can twist his toes and say as much with them as Lon Chaney can with his face. Emil Jannings is a wonderful actor because he is equally eloquent with his face, hands, legs, and back. He has a marvelously expressive carriage, and in his case I probably would not shoot one close-up. Jean Hersholt is the one actor who defies analysis. He is such a perfect master of his art that he, as an individual, has no screen personality. He is always the character, never Jean Hersholt, which makes

him the greatest screen actor we have. John Barrymore and Emil Jannings are as perfect as Jean with the mechanics of their work, but when they are on the screen we always can see the actors shining through their art, while with Hersholt there is nothing to remind us that we are looking at an actor. If Hersholt were a better business man he would not be such a good actor. He has carried his art past the public's ability to appreciate it. Barrymore and Jannings always will earn more money than Jean will because the public wants to know that it is paying to see acting, and apparently he never acts. Another weakness in our way of handling acting is the failure to realize what each good actor is adapted to best. Take as an example Alan Hale. I never have seen him as anything except a heavy, yet I have convinced myself that he is one of the most talented comedians we have. A spirit of fun, of reckless devilment, is so apparent in every part he plays that I can not understand why some producer does not recognize it and give him an opportunity to play the sort of role in which he is so successful. He is a good heavy because he is a good actor, but he would be a better comedian.

Gloria Comes Back in "Sadie Thompson"

S a parting shot, in dismissing The Loves of Carmen as a topic to write about, I stated that I hoped I never would see another picture directed by Raoul Walsh. In that picture he displayed a depravity that was nauseating, and in What Price Glory? he presented eating scenes that were the last word in vulgarity. I was thinking of these pictures when I expressed the hope that I never would see any more of his work on the screen. It was a wish that apparently I could not keep. I have seen Sadie Thompson. Walsh not only directed it, but he is the leading man in it. And I believe that it will be on my list of ten best pictures for this year. It is Gloria Swanson's supreme screen effort, and it will be considered as Walsh's most notable contribution to the screen, with the possible exception of What Price Glory? Despite the fact that the picture is made from the play Rain, something that dirty-minded people condemn as being unclean, and was entrusted to a director who revels in smut, there is not a foot of vulgarity in the entire nine reels. It is an amazing example of editing. Many scenes as bad as those I have condemned in other Walsh pictures, were shot during the making of Sadie Thompson, but they do not appear on the screen. Dismissing all his other pictures, and confining our attention to what we see on the screen in Sadie, we have to admit that Walsh is a talented director and an excellent actor. He has given us a great picture which brings Gloria back with a bang. Her performance is magnificent. It is the most arresting feature of a production that is notable for several things. Those who have seen or read the play will be interested in the manner in which it has been transferred to the screen to keep from offending bone-headed censors. It was done simply: the hypocritical preacher of the play is a hypocritical layman in the picture. I do not see what divinity it is that surrounds preachers to keep us from discussing them frankly on the screen, but as they compose a most uninteresting class of people who are doomed to extinction as the world thinks more clearly, I view with amusement

the elimination from Sadie Thompson of the collar that buttons behind, and can not see that it has any blighting effect on the picture as a dramatic work. Maugham's story gets all the credit and John Colton's masterly play is ignored on the screen, which also is all right with me, although I think it is a shabby trick to play on John. Walsh is credited with the adaptation. It is a notable piece of screen writing, and increases my reawakened admiration for Walsh. I would advise him to continue to go straight. He shows such admirable talent in each phase of his three-fold connection with this picture that it is a pity that he ever prostitutes such talent to the depiction of scenes that are more disgusting than artistic. It is a queer thing that he takes such a colorful story as Carmen and makes it revolting on the screen, then follows it with a sordid story like Rain and makes a great, clean drama of it. His adaptation and direction reveal in a remarkable way that anything can be put on the screen, provided it be done properly. I hope that when some of the narrow-minded censors turn their narrow eyes on it, they will be able to see themselves in Lionel Barrymore's characterization of the reformer. It is such a powerful characterization that it makes of the picture an indictment of reformers in general. It is not so much a treatise on morality as it is a sweeping denunciation of the sharpnosed hypocrites who infest the earth to its detriment. Sadie is pure, but loud, as far as we can judge from the picture. Purity is an attribute that it is a woman's prerogative to cherish or abuse, while loudness is unforgivable, and about the only thing in the picture for which we can condemn Sadie is that she chews gum.

Fine Performances Mark Production

ASSING from the mental gymnastics performed so nimbly to make Rain screen fodder for our youth, and considering it solely as a motion picture, we find it a screen masterpiece whose faults are not those of direction, acting or production. I remarked in the previous paragraph that it is an amazing example of editing to preserve its cleanliness, but in avoiding the muddy places it committed other faults that deny it perfection in my estimation, but my objections may be purely personal and perhaps will not be shared by those who see the picture. First, however, I would like to extend my respects to Gloria's performance, which I already have said is the greatest of her career. Her part is one that could be done justice only by an accomplished actress. Not once while viewing the unsatisfactory pictures in which she appeared with so much damage to her box-office strength, did I lose my faith in Miss Swanson's standing as an artist. I always believed her to be a splendid actress and in Sadie Thompson she is just that. From her lighter moments when she rollicks with the marines, to the great one in which she indulges in a wild outburst of invective that makes the reformer cringe, and then on to the despair that grips her towards the end of the picture, Gloria pursues a path set with gems of cinematic art. This picture will prove the soundness of an argument I advanced a year or so ago: that no one who has been a great box-office attraction is lost so hopelessly that he can not be brought back if he be given pictures equal in merit to those upon which his reputation was built. If Gloria be fortunate enough to

follow Sadie Thompson with something as good she will again be as near the top of the list as she ever was. To Lionel Barrymore will go a large share of the credit for the excellence of Sadie. In a masterly manner he shows us just what a nasty reptile a professional reformer can be. I have to smile now as I reflect how violently he made me hate him while viewing the picture. It is seldom that a heavy carries me past the point of admiring his performance, but Lionel made me forget his acting and awakened in me a feeling of strong hatred, which the large preview audience gave evidence of sharing cordially. I can not recall having seen Raoul Walsh as an actor in any previous picture. He is perfect in this one. James Marcus also appears to good advantage. All the acting is directed intelligently. There is considerable repression, but not enough to stifle expression. Walsh makes each of his characters, including himself, entirely human. Gloria is the only one in the cast who breaks loose, and she is the only one who would. In the first reel or two the picture is cut too sharply, something probably made necessary by over-shooting. When too many scenes are shot, too short pieces of them have to be inserted to carry the story, which makes the film jumpy when it reaches the public. The greatest fault of the editing is towards the end of the picture. We see all the characters reacting to some stupendous piece of news. There is great excitement; people run hither and yon; A tells B what all the fuss is about, and B adds to it-and the audience hasn't the remotest idea what has happened. It sees the reformer's wife enacting a scene, but it can not appraise her emotional portrayal because it doesn't know what she is portraying. By the time the audience is exasperated thoroughly a title explains that the reformer has killed himself. Had such a title opened the sequence, the audience would have been in a position to appreciate the manner in which it was directed and acted. The titles are another weakness of Sadie Thompson. The first one is a silly wisecrack and but few of the other narrative titles are in keeping with the spirit of the picture as a dignified piece of screen drama. They are as childish as the editing of the suicide sequence. They are punctuated in a manner that is a disgrace to such a great organization as United Artists. No person with knowledge of the manner in which the English langauge should be presented will accept Sadie Thompson altogether seriously.

"Patent Leather Kid" Is a Notable Picture

THE Patent Leather Kid is a great motion picture. It has everything—an entertaining and engrossing story, fine acting, intelligent direction, and an elaborate story. Its war sequences have not been excelled in any picture, not even in The Big Parade. The performance of Richard Barthelmess will rank among the best of the year. It is a revolutionary characterization for a hero. Dick plays a sleek looking, lowbrow prizefighter. During the entire eleven reels of the picture he does not perform one gracious act. He knocks out the girl he loves, rows with his manager, without provocation insults a man who is attentive to the girl, tries to dodge the draft, and shows a yellow streak when he reaches the trenches. He is an ungracious boor to the end, and even when he becomes heroic finally when under fire he performs a feat that

makes us admire him, but not like him. But in spite of everything, Dick makes the part a sympathetic one simply because he is a superb actor. He puts over the point of view of the unlikable character; makes us see the mental process back of each action of the prizefighter, and because we know him we excuse his actions as being something consistent with his character. He interests us, therefore we follow his affairs with sympathy and wish him well, although we would not ask him to dine with us. It is a part that calls for a wide range of acting, and Barthelmess is equal to all its demands. To me Dick is one of the most appealing actors on the screen, and always has been since I first saw him in a picture. As the prizefighter and later as the soldier he does some of the best work of his career. This picture and The Noose following one another so closely will reestablish him as a box-office asset. Hollywood is going to like Molly O'Day as the girl in The Patent Leather Kid. Her performance at times reaches heights that we might expect only from a Lillian Gish. Her characterization is consistent. She is planted as a hard boiled East Sider, and when she discovers Dick in a dressing station behind the lines, so badly wounded that he is not expected to live, she goes to pieces exactly as a girl of her origin would. Some of the Eastern reviewers have criticized her enactment of this scene, claiming that she over-acts it, but I do not agree with them. Molly O'Day is not going to get by on her looks as she unfortunately possesses an unattractive mouth, but she is going to be recognized as an actress of ability if she develops no temperament and attends strictly to business. An interesting characterization is contributed by Lawford Davidson. He rates in the picture as a heavy as he is antagonistic to the hero throughout, yet he is the gentleman at all times and does nothing that a gentleman should not do. In every encounter between him and Barthelmess Dick is in the wrong, a reversal of the standard treatment of hero and heavy. Davidson gives an excellent performance, and so does Arthur Stone. It is the first time I have seen Stone in a part that does his ability justice. His fondness for Dick is the keynote of his role and is portrayed with feeling and understanding. Matthew Betz is another who contributes to the wealth of excellent acting. As the domineering manager of the prizefighter he is splendid. Raymond Turner, a colored actor with more mouth than one person should have, has a screen personality that radiates joy, and uses it effectively to produce laughs. In such a big production there are many small parts and each of them is handled adequately. The cordial welcome that The Patent Leather Kid has been given wherever it has been shown demonstrates that the public appreciates good acting. It is not all Barthelmess. It is a convincing picture because every foot of acting in it is convincing. The policy of placing the chief burden of a picture on the star because he gets the most money is not sound economic reasoning. The more money that he gets the more there should be spent on the cast that surrounds him. The Patent Leather Kid is making a lot of money, not because the star gives a good performance, but because every performance in it is good.

Alfred Santell's Direction Splendid

ACKING a card index of past screen occurrences and possessing a mind that dismisses a picture as soon as its review is written, I have small standing as a historian, but I do not believe that Alfred Santell's name has been connected with any previous picture that would prepare us for the masterly direction he has given The Patent Leather Kid. Excepting too many close-ups, which we have grown to regard as stoically as we do the thorns on roses without deeming them detrimental to either the bloom or perfume, there is nothing in the direction to prompt anything but praise. The atmosphere of all the episodes is maintained admirably. It makes intimate scenes more convincing, and the war scenes terrific in their drama. There are two prizefights and each is handled in a way that brings out all its realism. In the second the hero is knocked out, and at the end of the picture we are spared a shot of him regaining his lost laurels. One of the notable things that Santell does is to create his comedy out of story material as he goes along. I was alone in a projection room when I saw the picture, consequently I do not know how many laughs it will provoke, but I would judge that there will be enough to give it some standing as a comedy. And everything that will cause a laugh is part of the story or assists in a characterization. The manner in which Barthelmess is introduced also is a refreshing departure. A short time ago I stated in The Spectator that the lead in a picture should not be introduced before he comes into the story, even if he were in earlier scenes. In this picture, made before my comments appeared, Dick is introduced in the manner I suggested. We first see him in a dressing room, first with his back to the camera, and later moving about among his handlers. He leaves with them for the ring and is introduced when he pauses to survey the crowd, the first time there was any excuse for giving him a close-up. Good direction. In some places Santell shows a disposition to get away from the conventional close-up treatment, using long shots and medium shots effectively, but on the whole there are too many close-ups for which there is no excuse. In one of them in an effort to get the heads as large as possible Barthelmess and Davidson, his captain, stand so closely together that they almost rub noses. You see the same idiotic thing in many pictures. It always makes me wonder if one of the actors had eaten onions or garlic before the scene was shot. But some of the close-ups are strong in drama, particularly one showing Dick in his transition from cowardice to bravery. It is excellent acting, and the close-up is justified, as is also a series of them showing Molly O'Day when she discovers Dick in the hospital. The war scenes were staged on a gigantic scale and in themselves would make any picture an outstanding one. His handling of them reveals Santell as a director with imagination and daring, as well as a keen sense of drama. In the New York sequences the personal element is planted so strongly that it persists throughout the war sequences, robbing them of any appearance of having been dragged in for their production value, as they were in Seventh Heaven and in practically all the other war pictures. In The Patent Leather Kid the girl is kept in the story by the conventional method of making her a nurse behind the lines. Seventh Heaven is the only picture that successfully avoided this device. In it Diane in Paris and Chico at the front are kept in touch with one another and with the audience by their daily exchange of telepathic messages, a clever way to avoid something that had become standardized. But in every other respect the war scenes in the Barthelmess picture are superior to those in Seventh Heaven. Even though they are on a sweeping scale they do not allow us to forget the story. And although they bring out all the horrors of war they are not gruesome. There are many scenes in the picture that have deep human appeal and over which, alone in the projection room, I shed a tear or two. The Patent Leather Kid will make friends for Barthelmess and First National wherever it is shown. Al Rocket is to be congratulated upon having been the producer of such a masterpiece.

Becoming a Victim of the Desert's Lure

7HAT is the lure of the desert? I had heard about it. I thought that those who prated about it were poseurs, that their claim was an affectation which might satisfy their souls, but which could not appeal to their intelligences. How could sand and cacti, and prickly, horticultural contortions, caught upright as they died and still standing as monuments to Nature in its cruelest mood, have any lure for a man who liked to have the thirsts of his landscapes appeased, and whose idea of a landscape was a green base which held a tree against a blue sky? But we went to the desert the other day, Donald and I, and we felt the lure. It is real, but I don't know why. I stood with Mary Pickford, Lillian Gish and Douglas Fairbanks, and we asked one another what the spell was, but no answer was forthcoming. It was their first visit to Palm Springs, as it was ours, and although all of us have seen the marvels that man has performed in this country and in Europe, we felt a new thrill as we stood in front of El Mirador hotel and gazed across the level bed of a valley in which Nature has planted things that have the pallor of death on them, and gave them shapes that suggest torture, and spikes and horns that indicate evil tempers—across all this we looked to the hills that rim the valley, hills that slumber beneath velvet robes colored by the whims of the sun, with here and there a head uncovered to catch the snow that high things wear in winter. We looked, and decided that never before had we seen anything more beautiful. It is a strange thing, this lure of the desert. I left it this morning, and I want to go back to-morrow. To me it is like a piece of savage poetry that is content with itself. A stream lures you with the song it sings; a tree rustles its leaves above the path it makes cool for you; from the green of a meadow buttercups make shy advances; a rose intoxicates you with its perfume; but the desert is indifferent to you. It is there, flat, dead, peopled by ghosts that frown. It has none of the crystal of the stream, the green of the tree, the red of the rose. It leaves its coloring to the sun and uses shadows of grotesque things to mottle the greyness of its wide expanse of sand; and it is silent with the silence of a community that has died from thirst and has remained a graveyard using petrified death struggles for tombstones. And still there is nothing gruesome about the desert-just savage, simmering poetry, an aloofness, an attractiveness that make it fascinating, more fascinating than any of the

grander things that I have seen. Perhaps the most amazing thing about that part of the desert upon the edge of which Palm Springs sits is El Mirador hotel. E. B. Edmonds and E. P. Severcool are hotelmen who felt the lure. They have given the desert an institution that for luxury and comforts one might expect to find only in the middle of a large city. I am not in the business of advertising hotels, but as I deem it my duty to be of service to those who read The Spectator, I can not refrain from pointing out that for a week-end away from pictures, or a week's sojourn in a new world less than four hours from Hollywood, Palm Springs is an ideal spot and El Mirador a perfect stopping place. There is a large swimming pool now ready, and as quickly as nature will allow money to operate there will be an eighteen-hole golf course, as well as several tennis courts.

D. W. Griffith Once More Comes to Bat

HEY say D. W. Griffith is the greatest director of them all. Borzage gives us a Seventh Heaven, Ford a Four Sons, Murnau a Sunrise, King a Stella Dallas, Vidor a Big Parade—all finer examples of screen art than Griffith ever gave us, and still they continue to say that D. W. is our greatest director. I never could see it. There are at least a score whose work I prefer to his, yet I traveled a long way to see his latest in preview. If he is possessed of the ability that the industry credits him with, a new picture by him would be a sensation throughout the world, but I do not recall anything that he has done in the past decade that has startled anyone. As I traveled to the preview I hoped that at last he had done it, and I looked at Drums of Love with sympathetic eyes. It is a good picture. It is the best thing that Griffith has done for a long time and is a credit to United Artists, but we have plenty of directors who could have done better with even less money. The chief features of Drums are its lavish production and striking photography. It unfolds a succession of gorgeous pictures that delight the eye. Many of them hold the screen for so brief a moment that one regrets the small return on the investment necessary to make them. Griffith has a fine sense of composition, never evidenced more emphatically than in this picture. We must credit him also with giving us a new Mary Philbin. When Drums is released this young woman is going to find herself on the heights where Merry-Go-Round placed her. She gives a beautiful performance, with all the lights and shades we might expect from an actress with many years more experience. She has but one big dramatic moment, when her husband finds her in her lover's arms, and rises to it splendidly. In her early sequences she is just a girl, a sweet and beautiful one, whom we would not expect to develop into the passionate mistress that she later becomes. She depicts each phase of the transition flawlessly. Don Alvarado is another surprise. Griffith lifts him out of the awkward youth class and presents him to us as a finished actor. No actor on the screen has more expressive eyes, and no one knows how to use them better. He shows a degree of naturalness that I never expected from him. He should become a greater favorite than Gilbert Roland or any of the other youngsters who have come to the front so rapidly of late. Lionel Barrymore, in a body make-up that would have been more effective if it had been

less cumbersome and apparently uncomfortable, reveals himself as the real actor we know him to be. It is a pleasure to see this artist getting a succession of roles which do credit to his great talent. The story brings out the great love existing between Barrymore and Alvarado, brothers, and the deformed Barrymore is a tender and gentle elder brother, although a relentless pursuer of his foes. Tully Marshall is another member of the cast who contributes a splendid performance as a rather despicable character. Joyce Coad, that most intelligent and delightful of child actresses, adds a pleasing touch. In addition to those I have mentioned there are many others who maintain the high average in acting established by the principals. Every detail of the production is on a lavish scale. The interiors are artistic creations that reflect the greatest credit on W. Cameron Menzies and his staff. There are beautiful exteriors peopled apparently by thousands of extras whom Griffith handles with great skill. He keeps the screen alive without sacrificing the pictorial values of his scenes. An unusual feature of the story is that both the female and male leads are killed in the last reel. Mary and Alvarado become lovers after Mary is married to Barrymore, and when the latter finds the other two in each other's arms his code of honor demands their deaths. It is a logical ending and I hope the public will express its approval of it so emphatically that our producers will be encouraged to make further departures from the standard endings that spoil so many pictures.

Picture Harmed By Faulty Editing

-HE Drums of Love would be a much better picture if it had been edited with more intelligence. There can be no advance from generation to generation in presenting naturalness on the screen, for it is something that does not change. This picture deals with a period of a hundred years ago; the customs and manners were established then and can not now be changed by any advance there may be in screen art. I presume that Griffith made a good job of depicting the life of the period. In any event, as I know nothing about it, I am willing to accept his version of it, and I congratulate him upon having presented it with so much beauty and animation. But when we consider those features of motion pictures that owe no allegiance to a past century, and which have progressed since Griffith began to direct, I am not willing to expand my congratulations to embrace his advancement in the purely technical side of the art. I understand that he has full control of all his productions, a liberty I would not grant him if he were spending my money, so I am within my rights in crediting him with the editing. Nowadays some effort is made to make close-ups match the long shots of which they are picked-out parts. Griffith ignores this. We see a man bow ceremoniously in a long shot and see the same bow repeated in a close-up. There are upward of a dozen such examples of stupid editing, ridiculous exhibitions of a crudeness that dates back to the birth of motion pictures. You find the same thing in all Griffith pictures, which would indicate that the only thing about him that has kept pace with the modern development of the screen is his reputation, and that is but a hangover from the days when it was established. The titles in Drums are as old-fashioned as the editing, but I will leave

their criticism to those among you who do not like oldfashioned titles. I like them. "Near Midnight", "The Next Day", I regard as perfect titles, although I am aware that screen art has advanced to a point that makes it necessary, when we mean "midnight", to say: "At that mystic hour when the night of one day ends and the morning of the next begins, when both hands of the clock are stretched toward heaven, when Time, the relentless and tireless traveler, checks off another number on the calendar-Midnight." But when you sum up this modern title, all you find is that someone went to a devil of a lot of trouble, and used a lot of words, to say one. No-I won't quarrel with D. W. about his titles. But I do quarrel with him for the profusion of shots in Drums that mean absolutely nothing. I saw the picture in about twelve reels, in which it is to be released. It is at least three reels too long. There are not more than nine reels of action in it, the rest being made up of "production" shots unnecessary to a picture already so rich in production value. The camera keeps picking up Bill Austin doing something, but nothing that explains his presence in the picture. Tully Marshall does something in the last reel or two, but long before that there are close-ups of him that have no meaning whatever. There are scenes of hundreds of people assembled in a street, but I could not see what connection they had with the story. There are not more than ten feet of film showing a great exterior set in which food is being served to soldiers. It has nothing to do with anything, being merely a wanton waste of money. All through the picture are other evidences of an extravagance that adds nothing to it. The three excess reels apparently represent an effort to realize something on a senseless expenditure. I do not believe the public will take kindly to this picture in twelve reels. There is not enough story value to justify the length. The action drags in many places, and you can not delude the public into accepting pretty pictures in place of movement. With capable editing Drums of Love could have been made a notable picture.

Here Is One Picture With a Thought In It

NLY occasionally do we get a picture that provokes intelligent discussion by reason of possessing a theme that can be discussed. Until theatres are classified and we make separate pictures for each class, the screen will be rather a themeless art. We can not discuss immorality frankly, nor can we unbridle passion. And we must leave religion alone, although I don't know why, for the people who do not believe in God have as much right to their opinions as have those who do. On Sunday there are one hundred people outside churches to every one inside, but the one still dominates the screen, which is more amusing than alarming, for such things have a habit of adjusting themselves. But as it is shackled now, the screen seldom gives us a theme that we can argue about, limiting our discussion of pictures to the manner in which the leading man makes love or the shortness of the skirt of the leading woman, discussions that lack vigor enough to make them last long. It is refreshing, therefore, to find a picture like Doomsday, made from a novel by Warwick Deeping, starring Florence Vidor, and directed by Rowland V. Lee, who has given us Barbed Wire and other notable pictures. Doomsday makes us think, although its theme is as old as civilization. Miss Vidor is a poor young woman, the daughter of a retired British officer, an irvalid whose care adds to the burden of her household duties. She is in love with Gary Cooper, a young man who is struggling with a run-down farm. Marriage to him means but a continuation of her drudgery in another setting. Lawrence Grant, possibly thirty years her senior, is a wealthy collector of art objects, and the owner of an imposing and beautifully furnished home for which he desires a mistress. He does not love Florence, nor does she love him, but he is impressed with her beauty and regards her just as he does the gems in his collection. He feels that she would be a valuable addition to his other possessions, and he proposes to her. What should she do? Is love, after all, the supreme consideration? Is she not entitled to a life of luxury, free from the drudgery and forced economies that make existence drab and harsh for so many millions of women with beauty and intellects to fit them for something higher? There is nothing vicious about Grant. He is a gentleman of irreproachable habits and is ready to shower Florence with the rarest silks and the choicest jewels, and asks nothing from her but to stand by his side and preside over his home. Cooper would be only her partner in poverty, and neither silks nor jewels appear on the horizon of a life with him. Most effectively the picture brings out the contrasts in the paths from which she must select. She confesses to Cooper her love for him, and accompanies him to his home where she inspects for the first time the wretched kitchen and finds an alarm clock set for four o'clock, which she realizes would be her rising time if she married the poor farmer. On her way home Grant comes along in his Rolls-Royce, against the cushions of which she reclines until she reaches his residence, where she stops to have a cup of tea. The transition from poverty to luxury has drama in it. Florence marries Grant, not being brave enough to face the drabness of life on the run-down farm. Then what? How is such a marriage going to turn out? That is the thought that sustains your interest in the picture when it has progressed that far. Grant continues to be the perfect gentleman, but does not become the lover, and while Florence is old enough to enjoy wealth and luxury she is not old enough to do without love. She can't stand it, and divorces Grant. She has a hard job on her hands to make Cooper forgive and forget, but finally manages it. Did she act sensibly? How many of my women readers would have spurned the riches that Florence spurned? And how many pictures that you see suggest such questions? How many do you see with themes that interest you so much that you pay little attention to the acting and direction? More of them should, which is my reason for going into this one at length.

Florence Vidor Is Good in "Doomsday"

OOMSDAY will prove to be a good audience picture. While it has a definite theme and sticks to it, the theme is not too deep for the simplest mind. Its development will interest the intelligent person without perplexing the moron. Rowland Lee has given the picture the masterly direction that we have grown to expect from him. He is one of our few intellectual directors, and combines with clear thinking a good taste in composition and

a sound sense of drama. One thing I can not forgive him is his fondness for close-ups. Doomsday is crowded with senseless ones that would have ruined a picture that did not have to offset them the inherent strength that this one possesses. I have contended many times in The Spectator that under no circumstances should a love scene be divided into individual close-ups. It is a screen habit that can not be defended. If Rowland, a persistent reader of The Spectator and one of my good friends, were a trifler with his art, I would charge him with having treated a love scene in Doomsday with the idea of getting a rise out of me. If he did, I can assure him that I saw the joke, for if a director ever made a love scene downright funny with close-ups, he does it in this picture. First we see Miss Vidor and Gary Cooper in a two-shot close-up. Then come the inevitable individual close-ups. But Rowland does not stop there. He proceeds to give us in turn-I hope you will believe me-huge individual close-ups of the eyes, the mouths, and the hands of the two lovers. Perhaps he shot them as a joke on the editor, who, lacking any sense of humor or possessing a keener one than the director, incorporated them in the picture. It is the most amazing love scene I ever saw on the screen. But in every other respect Lee's direction is flawless. He fills the picture with little touches of genius. When the immaculate Lawrence Grant comes storming out of his wife's room after their first quarrel, he pauses at the door long enough to put a flower in his buttonhole, an action so consistent with his character that it has an element of humor in it. Miss Vidor gives in this picture the best performance of her career. The camera follows her all the way through, and she proves equal to the demands of every scene. If Paramount could secure for her more stories as good as this one and give her more such intelligent direction, it would be unwise to take her out of the star class. Gary Cooper surprised me with the sincerity and understanding he displays. For the first time I was impressed with the young man. I always have credited him with a boyish awkwardness and a shyness that were attractive, but have not seen him in any part that I felt he did full justice to. But in Doomsday he does excellently. That splendid actor, Lawrence Grant, contributes a performance that for sheer artistry could not be excelled. It always is a treat to see him on the screen, and it is to the credit of Paramount that it uses him so often. The whole story of Doomsday is told with these three characters. As I look over the notes on the picture that I made in the projection room I find one that I should have dealt with above when I was discussing close-ups. There is a shot showing a close-up of Grant's stomach as it comes through a doorway. The camera hits him squarely in, and confines itself to, his middle as he enters the scene, later backing up far enough to show us whose middle it is. I do not understand the shot. In the sense in which we credit a man with possessing a stomach, Lawrence has none. He does not protrude, which makes the shot one of a flat surface, which, robbed of its corelation with the rest of his anatomy, means nothing whatever. Close-ups are supposed to be used to emphasize expressions by enlarging them. If Lawrence's graceful stomach is so expressive that it is entitled to emphasis in a close-up I failed to notice it. Stomachs, I'll grant you, are important, but I can not see how anyone can claim that Grant's has any pictorial value. Nor is it dramatic. Why, then, the close-up? However, Doomsday

is a good picture that no exhibitor anywhere need be afraid to book, which is the matter of most importance to the exhibitors in every state in the Union who now read The Spectator.

"Sorrell & Son" a Very Fine Picture

ORRELL and Son is a fine motion picture, precisely the kind that would be sneered at by those quaint asses who write reviews for that class of Eastern publications that deem themselves quite smart. It dares to be human, a quality that New York regards as a weakness. But wherever there are fathers and sons, wives and mothers, and children who regard them as children do, Sorrell and Son will find its way into hearts and will satisfy them. Herbert Brenon has done a fine piece of work, and H. B. Warner has contributed to the screen one of its finest performances. It is a story of a great love existing between a father and son, but I found equally appealing the great friendship of two men, a friendship founded upon the respect they hold for one another. In all the scenes between Warner and Norman Trevor there is a wealth of manly tenderness, fine acting by both men and splendid direction by Brenon, making them stir the emotions quite as much as do the beautiful scenes in which the father and son appear. The atmosphere of the picture is one of its greatest charms. In a few days' shooting in England Brenon obtained scenes which make the picture authentic and which fit in appropriately and smoothly with that part of the production that was made in Hollywood. If more producers would go to as much trouble as United Artists did to make the locales of their pictures real, there would not be so much agitation abroad against American films. The outstanding feature of Sorrell and Son, as I already have intimated, is the magnificent performance of Harry Warner. It is a part for a great actor, and he acts it greatly. We must thank Brenon for having the good sense to refrain from making Warner register all his emotions in close-ups. A hand clenching a napkin while the face was turned from the camera; a head bowed on arms resting on a mantelpiece, with the full figure of the actor with his back to the camera composing the scene, cause more emotional reaction by an audience than a glycerine smeared face ever could. In all his grouping Brenon reveals his appreciation of the value of medium and long shots. There is one shot that is a masterpiece of composition. It is of a sitting-room. Through a door in the background we see the dying Sorrell lying on a bed, his great friend standing beside him; in the foreground, separated by the width of the room, the disconsolate son and his bride, and in the center, the great surgeon who announces that there is no hope. It is a gripping scene, and one almost devoid of action. Every performance in the picture is flawless. The story being practically a biography, picks up characters and drops them as it proceeds, making the only long part that played by Warner. Trevor, Alice Joyce, Carmel Myers, Lionel Belmore, Louis Wolheim, Paul McAllister, Anna Q. Nillson, and Nils Asther are splendid. Mickey McBan plays Asther as a boy, but did not impress me greatly, as he lacked the tenderness and feeling that would have matched the rest of the picture. Mary Nolan struck the one jarring atmospheric note. I have no fault to find with her acting,

but I think her part should have been played by a girl more closely resembling the English type as presented in the book. In only one respect do I consider that Brenon stressed sentiment too heavily. Whenever Trevor, Warner's benefactor, does an act of kindness his face wears a benign smile that would indicate that he is fully aware that he is bestowing a benefaction. Men don't act that way when they are doing one another favors. I would have made Trevor perform his good deeds in a most matter-of-fact manner. His very efforts to suppress all suggestion of sentiment would have added immeasurably to the sentiment of the scenes. Too much stressing defeats the end that is striven for. When an act in itself is one of kindness there is no reason why the man performing it should endeavor by his expression to make it appear kind. But it is a small fault to find with so fine a picture, which is one that prompts me to thank Joe Schenck personally for the pleasure I derived from viewing it. It's that sort.

"Feel My Pulse" Is Good Entertainment

EBE DANIELS, in her latest picture, Feel My Pulse, directed by Gregory La Cava, has a story made up of incidents which at least might happen, a good fortune she has not had in any picture in which I have seen her in a year or so. It will please her admirers and should do well at any box-office. Certainly it will cause a lot of laughter, and any picture that does that is a success. Bebe and Heinie Conklin have a drunk scene which is deliciously funny, and the slow motion camera is used to good effect in another scene in which Bebe throws a large bottle of chloroform into a gang of bootleggers. These are the two comedy high marks of the production, which is amusing all the way through. For the present at least Bebe leaves exhibitions of Fairbanks' agility to Doug and essays a part of a perfectly dumb hypochondriac. She is too intelligent looking to be altogether convincing as a dumb person, but she manages it fairly well. William Powell has a part that makes us remember what an excellent actor he is. Some day I hope to see Bill in a role in which he starts as a heavy and becomes sympathetic. The prevailing custom of making the heavy all bad and the hero all good keeps us from having on the screen something that it lacks: diversified characterizations that would give our good actors a chance to display their wares. I always notice a quality in Powell's villainy that convinces me that he could make a great success of a sympathetic role, but I don't suppose that Paramount ever will be brave enough to give him an opportunity to demonstrate if I am right. Richard Arlen is the boy in Feel My Pulse. I like him. It is refreshing to see such a husky looking chap in the role of hero. Those who have been encouraged by her recent pictures to look for Bebe in a jumping-jack part may be disappointed with the quiet and uneventful manner in which her new picture opens and continues for a couple of reels. But when the bootleggers and hijackers enter the story things begin to happen. La Cava's direction is good. My constant onslaughts on the lamentable abuse of close-ups has had the effect on my critical faculties of making me judge the quality of direction by the number of the offensive shots in a picture. In this respect I have no quarrel with La Cava, who shows an appreciation of the

value of medium and long shots. With them he handles many scenes that most of the other directors would cut into a series of senseles close-ups, which makes me like his direction. And he shows us a final fadeout without a clinch, which I regard as the first entrant in the contest for The Spectator gold medal for the most original and appropriate final fadeout shown on the screen this year. Arlen draws Bebe's attention to the last paragraph of something he has written. He writes that he wonders if she will marry him. Bebe writes the one word "Yes", and on that one word the picture ends. I hope it will battle its way through the projection room and be a part of the picture as it is released finally. In the battle scenes between bootleggers and hijackers Feel My Pulse makes a direct steal from Westerns. The revolvers used are of the Tom Mix kind that can be shot indefinitely without being reloaded. Some day we are going to have a gun battle on the screen in which one of the combatants stops firing long enough to load his gun. It is going to end the battle, for all those engaged in it are going to die from amazement. There are some good titles in Feel My Pulse. Bebe is characterized as extremely cultured. Such a girl would ask a taxi driver what "remuneration" he expected. She would not say "renumeration" as a title in the picture has it.

THERE is a shot in Doomsday showing Florence Vidor and Gary Cooper looking out of a window. To show what they are looking at there is a cut to a forest of trees. Then we come back to them, and Cooper speaks a title to the effect that he will cut down the trees he cherishes in order to equip his home with furnishings that

will make it comfortable for Miss Vidor, who has promised to marry him. We do not see the trees again. For a long time I have had a theory about these shots, although I never expressed it. I believe that following the title there should have been another cut to the trees. When we see them before we know why we are looking at them they mean little to us. When Cooper speaks his title it gives us a definite interest in the trees. Now we know that they are to be chopped down, and we would like to look at them again, for in our first glimpse of them we did not know what to look for. Now we know. How many trees are there? How much of a job is it going to be to chop them down? If the title does not make us interested in them sufficiently to prompt us to ask such questions it should not have appeared on the screen, for it could have no story value. If there be anything in the idea, it applies to shots in a great many pictures. We are shown things that mean nothing to us, for no reason for viewing them is given until they have left the screen. We might look at a shot of a plain looking building in Washington. We do not know why, therefore we do not really see anything. But if a title follows the shot, stating that it is the house in which Lincoln died, we become interested in it immediately, and the only way our interest can be served is by another look at the house. Picture technic, however, has not advanced far enough to recognize that fact. I commend the suggestion to the fellows who sit in conferences as something to chat about.

FOR sustained inaccuracy of punctuation the titles in The Patent Leather Kid are in a class by themselves. When Molly O'Day finds Dick Barthelmess apparently dying from

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his wounds, she goes to pieces. She pleads with the surgeon to save her sweetheart. With clenched fists she pounds the doctor's chest, and speaks a title which appears on the screen this way: "He's mine-can't you understand -he's mine." Now let us forget what we learned in the lower grades of the public schools and consider only that we are turning out art that makes its appeal through the medium of the eye. Look again at the title as it appears on the screen, and remember that it is spoken at a highly dramatic moment. Now let us look at it as it should have been punctuated: "He's mine! Can't you understand? He's mine!" Which form looks as if it has some drama in it? If the lowbrows in pictures can not understand that correct punctuation would make an appeal to the intellects of many millions of people, they at least should be able to grasp the fact that it would appeal to the eyes of all the rest. The fellow who punctuated the titles in The Patent Leather Kid tried hard. After he forgot to put interrogation marks after several questions he gives evidence of having remembered suddenly that such a symbol exists. He was so anxious not to forget to make it a feature of the next inquisitive title that he puts it right in the middle of the question. No wonder most of the intellectual people regard the screen as something unworthy of their notice. Ignorant punctuation is costing producers millions of dollars a year, yet they think it funny that I continue to attack it.

PICTURE producing companies are reducing their advertising in film trade papers to such an extent that the papers are worrying. Two of them merged. undoubtedly will go out of business. Anyone with any knowledge of the publishing business must have known that such a thing would come to pass. The trade papers have been built on a rotten foundation. They have lived on the most outrageous advertising copy that ever found its way into type. Before pictures were made Eastern trade papers carried full-page advertisements extolling them in a most extravagant manner. The advertisements were full of lies, and it was upon these lies that the papers lived. What was inevitable has happened. Exhibitors disregarded the advertisements and the producers finally woke up to the fact that the money they were paying for them brought no returns. After squandering in the aggregate a few million dollars, as is the way of the industry, producers are seeking other mediums for the exploitation of their pictures. The trade papers have only themselves to blame for their lack of revenue. They joined hands with the producers in lying to the latter's customers and the customers have repudiated them. The Spectator, carrying no producer advertising, has more exhibitor circulation already than most of the papers published solely for circulation among exhibitors. In another year it will have more exhibitor readers than any other publication published anywhere. Any paper that is absolutely on the square with its readers must eventually supplant those that are not.

DIRECTORS should give more attention to their mobs. As we see them now they are too mechanical and so obviously made to order. I have not made mob psychology a study, but I would hazard the guess that when you have upwards of one hundred people in a crowd the attention of all of them can not be kept concentrated simultaneously

on any given object or incident. At least one of them will be leaning over to pick up something he has dropped; another will turn to see who the devil is poking him in the back, and some disconsolate mother will be looking for her child. Yet on the screen every person in every mob looks at what all the others are looking at, all the heads being turned in the same direction. Directors feel that this treatment builds drama. Nothing can add drama to a scene that is not of itself true to life, and there always is more drama in real life than can be manufactured artificially for the screen or the stage. I believe directors would make their scenes more dramatic if they would forget drama and concentrate on naturalness. Another unreal thing about mobs that I have noticed is that they are complete when we first see them. It is seldom that we see latecomers rushing to the scene of the excitement, something always characteristic of crowds in real life. It's something worth thinking about.

JUDGING by some letters that I have received the impression seems to prevail that I interested myself in Arthur Lake's case in an effort to get him more salary. I am not interested in how much money he makes. I have no doubt that already he receives ten times what any twenty-one-year-old boy in the world is worth. Screen salaries are ridiculous, and I am not interested in ridiculous things. I criticized Universal for attempting to coerce Arthur into signing a prolongation of his contract. He wanted to play the lead in Harold Teen, and one of the assorted threats was that he could not play it unless he signed a new contract. I resent threats, and advised Arthur how he could get the part without signing the contract. No considera-

At Albert Gran's Party

GEORGE SYDNEY

said something to me about advertising regularly in The Spectator. It may interest him to know that this space will cost him nine dollars each issue, beginning with this one.

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tion of salary entered into it. If by following my advice he makes more money, I hope he spends it wisely. Beyond that I don't care. I took up Janet Gaynor's case because it was a typical example of how producers act in restraint of trade. I understand that she has been given a new contract calling for a salary several times more than what she was getting. At no time was I interested in her salary, but if she is getting a larger one now I congratulate her, and I hope it helps her to acquire a wonderful hopechest.

SOME Eastern critics were impressed with Charlie Chaplin's titles in The Circus. They deem the one word "Hungry" an ideal title. So do I. I am aware that any of those clever fellows who make a business of writing our titles would have put many more words into this one, but none of them would have said any more or would have reached the point more promptly. When it comes to titles I am a revolutionist. They are one of the outstanding weaknesses of our present pictures. They stress one feature of pictures that should not be stressed. If the pictures were made properly only a word here and there would be all that was needed to carry the story along. The trouble with those who write them is that they try to make the titles stand out as a prominent feature of a picture, whereas every effort should be made to make them as unobtrusive as possible. But as the inevitable general adoption of sound devices will do away with titles altogether it does not profit us much to discuss them. The clever fellows who write them now need have no misgiving about the future. Their cleverness will be in demand when pictures provide a market for bright conversation.

SENSELESS quarrel between a boy and a girl is a pretty slim thing upon which to hang a motion picture. No Place To Go, a First National production featuring Mary Astor and Lloyd Hughes, devotes a lot of footage to the progress of a quarrel between the two. As there was no real reason for the quarrel, Mervyn Le Roy, the young director who made the picture, had a hard job on his hands when he tried to make it interesting. In the last Spectator I pointed out several faults in The Flying Romeos, a Le Roy picture, his second, I believe. No Place To Go I presume was his first. It was directed better than the second, but has such a slim story that it will make no great stir in the amusement world. But it contains two interesting performances by the featured players. In this one Mary Astor is something besides a lovely creature to look at. She reveals quite a sense of comedy. So does Hughes. He is one of our most pleasing young leading men. Le Roy shows the first quarrel of the two in individual close-ups. Quarrels should receive the same treatment as love scenes. Both parties are essential to them, and they should not be divided into close-ups.

Y OU can't fool me with those mystery things. The Gorilla was well under way when I encountered it. As soon as I saw Fred Kelsey chewing a cigar and wearing his hat in the house, I knew he was a detective; when I saw Brooks Benedict carrying a notebook I knew he was a reporter, and when I saw a badly punctuated title I knew the whole thing was a motion picture. The screen is entertainment that people attend without regard for its beginning or end. A picture that is interesting for its full

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course only if the person viewing it has seen its opening sequence, is not entertainment suited to a moving audience. Separate scenes in themselves should be interesting enough to hold the attention of the late-comer until he gets some idea of the drift of the story. I missed the opening sequences of The Gorilla, and although I sat through nearly an hour of it I had no idea what it was about, and what I saw of it did not interest me enough to cause me to sit through the short reels and find how the feature started. If it were a good picture, I would have been impressed with as much of it as I saw, which is all I can say about it.

THE characters in Sadie Thompson are introduced in a I new way. They are passengers aboard ship, and one of the crew asks each in turn to write something in his autograph album. We see what each writes and we see the signature to it, which acquaints us with the character each is playing. In addition to serving as a means of identification, this method has another valuable quality: What each person writes has a bearing on his personality and the theme of the story. By the time the album has made its round we know who the characters are and are acquainted with the theme we are to see expounded. If United Artists uses the same method again, I trust it will pardon me for suggesting that it might be a good idea to get different people to write the separate inserts for a husband and wife. When the same handwriting appears over the signatures of both a man and his wife, some unthinking person might believe that one person did all the writing. You know how unintelligent motion picture audiences are!

VARIETY reports that Westerns are not maintaining their box-office strength. The wonder is that they have held up as long as they have. Despite the fact that the virile, out-door story is the only kind that has practically universal appeal, the Western picture never has risen above the crude habits it contracted a quarter of a century ago. Westerns are deplorable things, inconsistent, illogical, and crazy, yet they have in them everything that appeals to young and old. They show us life in the raw, and embrace glorious scenery, great riding, and all the things that each of us would like to do. They are losing their appeal because the public simply can't stand any

longer the absolute asinity of their treatment. Some wise producer could put Westerns into first run houses if he put some brains into the present formula. I thought Charlie Rogers was going to do it with Ken Maynard, but the last couple of his pictures that I have seen conformed to most of the idiocies of their class.

JESSE LASKY states in an interview that road shows are going out and that hereafter Paramount will concentrate on good pictures rather than on big ones. Over a year ago I stated in The Spectator that the only way to make road shows was to make each picture as perfect as possible, a system by which once in a while a road show would come into being. A road show becomes one when it reaches the screen, not when it is put on paper. The Fox organization does not boast about the road shows it is going to make. It makes them by trying to make each one as good as possible. The reverse has been true of Paramount. It boasts about them, but does not make them. I congratulate it upon having adopted the only sure plan by which they can be made.

KENTUCKY exhibitor, in a letter saying some kind A things about The Spectator, asks me if it is true that Jetta Goudal "walked out" on De Mille. He says he understands that P. D. C. explains the fact that it can not deliver any more Goudal pictures with the assertion that Miss Goudal broke her contract. I can assure this exhibitor that Miss Goudal did not break her contract. She refused to accept a cut in the salary stipulated in her contract which was to terminate next May, and last September the De Mille company simply stopped paying her. Until the last week in January she held herself in readiness to respond to any call from the studio, and at that time she entered suit for her back salary. Her differences with the De Mille company will be aired in court, and The Spectator will refer to it briefly in order to acquaint exhibitors with the facts.

THE new United Artists theatre opened with a grammatical error. Its first screen announcement read: "The United Artists Theatre, in association with West Coast Theatres, Inc., present—" It should have read "presents". Apparently the man who prepared the announcement confines his reading to motion picture titles.

AS THEY APPEAL TO A YOUTH

By DONALD BEATON - The Spectator's 17-Year-Old Critic

SORRELL AND SON is a picture which can rank with Beau Geste in the list of Herbert Brenon's directorial efforts. It is a perfect piece of work, and it is also human. As Brenon said in his dedication, the story is about your father and my father. Everything is brought home to the audience with force, because Stephen Sorrell is human and typical. The picture will probably be misunderstood a great deal, and to a great many people some of the things in it will seem strange. But that is chiefly because the story is laid in England and is about English people. To my mind the last reel was unnecessary. The picture is in ten reels and the

ninth ends with Sorrell, after a bad heart attack, saying that he wouldn't interrupt his son's honeymoon for the world. That sums up his attitude all through the picture, and was more powerful than the rather unsatisfactory ending. The picture should have ended with a shot of Sorrell rather than one of his son and his wife. There should have been more left to the audience's imagination. As it was, the ending was a bit too obvious. The tenth reel should have been cut out.

H. B. Warner, as Stephen Sorrell, gave the most brilliant performance he has ever given the screen. His work was absolutely without a flaw. Alice Joyce's work was also very good.

There was a love scene between her and Warner which was a masterpiece in tenderness and feeling. Norman Trevor was excellent, and so was Anna Q. Nilsson. Nils Asther, as young Sorrell, did very well. The rest of the cast was on a par with the others I have mentioned.

NE of the finest pictures turned out lately is Sadie Thompson, starring Gloria Swanson, and directed by Raoul Walsh. There were some fine dramatic scenes in it, and it was unique in that at no place did it drag. As a rule, in pictures that are full of heavy drama, there are many times when the action drags. That was not so, however, with Sadie Thompson. The action moved along steadily and there were no wasted moments. The whole picture was

well-rounded and complete. Even the happy ending fitted in. In a picture like Sadie Thompson an unhappy ending is the kind one would expect more naturally than a happy one. As it was, if the happy ending had been put a little less adroitly, it would have looked too much like movie stuff. There was only one minor thing in the picture which was bad. The mate of the steamer which brought Sadie to Pago-Pago came ashore with her. All the time he was on shore he was with her, and he never was shown taking a drink; yet he became dead drunk in a little while. Then he did a scene at the turnstile which would have been funny except for the fact that his intoxication was so mysterious. How-

ever, that was only a minor detail.

The cast of Sadie Thompson was all that could be desired. Gloria Swanson gave the greatest performance she has ever given on the screen. Her work was absolutely perfect. Raoul Walsh used far too many close-ups in the picture, yet Miss Swanson's acting was so good that even too many close-ups couldn't spoil it. Lionel Barrymore, as the hypocritical reformer, proved, as he has proved time and time again, that he is one of the greatest character actors the screen has. Mr. Barrymore has the knack of falling right into the character he is playing and living the part. Every move he makes helps build up his characterization. Raoul Walsh, who also took a part, was perfect in his characterization, also. He had the good sense not to try and over-act all over the screen, and as a result, he was very good. The rest of the cast was highly satisfactory.

TER WILD OAT is another Colleen Moore atrocity like Twinkletoes. There hardly is any attempt at humor in the action; the whole picture depended for laughs on a bunch of rotten titles charged to Gerald Duffy, George Marion, and a man by the name of Robinson, whose initials I didn't get. There was only one funny title in the whole bunch, something about the guests in a hotel still voting for Bryan. I can't remember what it was, but it was funny. Otherwise the titles were a series of the world's most awful puns. The theme of the story is a thing I cannot find funny, that of a person making a fool of herself. Colleen Moore, who gives a good performance, saves her money for years so she can go to a certain fashionable resort. When she goes, she goes in a dress that she couldn't have bought anywhere, no matter how she tried. Gwen Lee, as a cabaret girl, tells her what to buy. At her every appearance on the screen, Gwen, while she is not dressed richly, is dressed smartly enough to show that she knows something about clothes; yet when she picks clothes out for Colleen she gets ridiculous things. The hotel where Colleen goes is supposed to be full of refined, well-bred people, yet they treat her as if she were something like the "Black Doom" in The Gaucho. Even if she did look

queer and out of place, they never would have cut her so openly. Anyway, she looked as if she had enough sense not to act like something out of the funny paper. Before she came to the resort she had been shown reading all about the doings of society. Her reading should have shown her how to

The story of Her Wild Oat was so old that there certainly was nothing in it to make the picture interesting. In this picture there were two old plots mixed in together. One was the poor working girl saving her money for a grand vacation, and the other was the girl impersonating a noblewoman. There was a reporter who planned the impersonation. Just what good it was going to do his paper to have the girl become an impostor wasn't made plain. It was apparently regarded as a great scoop, but how the arrival of a duchess at a fashionable hotel would be a great piece of news is beyond me. The girl was supposed to be a very sweet little thing and all that, but she made such efforts to flirt with somebody that the house detective got after her. Also, the cabaret girl came to the lunch stand in "the wee small hours" and, after consuming a cup of coffee, which seemed to be the only thing Colleen dispensed at her lunch stand, announced that she was going to rehearsal. That certainly is a funny hour for rehearsals. However, I think the rehearsal was put in just for an opportunity for the titlers to put in one of their awful puns or jokes.

LL the old hokum which has A made Reginald Denny's prizefighting motion picture hits is included in On Your Toes, his latest. There is some new stuff, too; but it is all hokum, old or new. The worst thing in the whole picture was the way the grandmother was characterized. Fred Newmeyer, who directed On Your Toes, did a pretty fair job except for that. The grandmother, played by Mary Carr, was supposed to have considerable initiative and pep, yet when she came to see her grandson, she wore the proverbial screen grandmother outfit, consisting of a hat made of a pancake and some feathers and a cloak which is also made mainly of feathers. In this day and age when grandmother usually arrives home along with the morning paper, that stuff is all wet. The other night I was at a theatre where there was vaudeville, and an old lady dressed in that stuff came in and sat down. She created a sensation, and the majority of the audience thought she was connected with one of the acts. However, she was not, unless she was the daughter of one of the dancers, who both looked quite old enough to make that premise possible.

When will the motion picture industry realize that the mothers and grandmothers of today don't dress like that? Hedda Hooper has the right idea when she plays mothers. She is the up-to-date, smart, pretty mother and is typical of practically all the mothers these days. When all the

mothers on the screen are done that way, pictures will become a good deal more true to life. However, to get back to On Your Toes, Denny wins the fight and becomes champion. Nobody thought he would lose, because the hero's winning the fight is as much of a screen institution as the archaic mother.

HERE is something queer about moving pictures when a picture which is true to life is hailed as a masterpiece. Motion pictures are supposed to show real human beings, but if one stops to look, he will see how unreal the average motion picture character is. On the screen, when the girl goes down to the corner to post a letter, her mother kisses her tenderly and stands on the porch waving after her. When she gets back she and her mother hug and kiss as if she had been to the North Pole on a visit. All children on the screen have to act slightly demented. Whenever a director wishes to show that the little boy in the cast is lively and full of spirit, he has him throw a rock through a window or kick one of his playmates in the face. In fact, to look at the screen, one would imagine that the only thing litle boys ever do is break windows and fight. I think that the majority of directors should take a little time off and read Tarkington's books.

AD and I went to Palm Springs to see what the desert Well, it's not like anything. It has great individuality. That's the only description of the desert I can think of. So much for it. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Palm Springs is the luxurious hotels it contains. El Mirador, where we stayed, is the equal of any city hotel as far as service and comfort go. The fact that the visitor is in the desert certainly doesn't mean that he has to rough it. A few miles from Palm Springs is Palm Canyon. Dad and I drove up there. On the way we saw an example of the "noble red man". He was red, anyway, but as to noble manliness, I am not so sure. The most energetic man in the world, Douglas Fairbanks, came up there. However, to paraphrase an old saying, "His energy was wasted on the desert air." Every time I looked out the window, I could see Mr. Fairbanks walking rapidly to nowhere in particular. He worked so hard that he really did deserve to have something happen, but nothing ever happens in the desert. It wouldn't dare happen, because the desert frowns on action.

WHEN a picture is honeycombed with small faults and mistakes, it is surprising how much it can be weakened. The Gay Defender, Richard Dix's latest picture, is an example of that. Gregory La Cava directed the picture, so I suppose the many small omissions may be charged to him. Not that there weren't plenty of big mistakes; there were; but the smaller ones predominated. In two

or three scenes, Dix is shown in a semi-close-up playing a guitar. He strums the strings with his right hand, while his left, instead of manipulating the strings so he can get some music out of them, is clamped unmovingly around the upper part of the instrument. In another place, he and the girl are talking in the patio. Their two fathers come out talking to within a few feet of Dix and the girl. Of course, he and the girl don't notice them right away at all. According to best moving picture standards they must be deaf, dumb, and blind. In another place, Dix is accused of murdering a man. He is immediately nearly mobbed by the crowd which gathers. His family is one of the greatest in the country, but that fact seems to have no effect in saving him from lynching. But that is enough for the small faults. The picture dragged terribly in spots. La Cava is all for breaking up a scene between two people into close-ups. In the same scene where Dix is playing the guitar for the girl, La Cava shows the girl in a close-up and then switches to Dix. He could have made a very beautiful scene had he shown them both at the same time in a medium shot, because there was a bed of flowers behind them which would have made a beautiful background. However, the picture was quite entertaining in spite of its faults.

THERE is something about Quality Street which makes one think of these little Dresden china figures of men and women which are used as ornaments on mantelpieces. Sidney Franklin, whose direction is very good, has put the Barrie touch into the pic-Most directors would have lost it and in it lies the picture's greatest charm. The story is simple, but it is done so beautifully that the lack of story is not noticeable at all. A touch of pleasant humor is given the picture by the titles, which are written in the style of the time of the picture. Marion Davies gives one of the best performances she has done yet. Her comedy scenes are perfect and her serious scenes are also well done. Conrad Nagel, however, gave the most consistently good performance of the entire cast. His work has been getting better with every picture he has been in lately, and his performance in Quality Street is by far the best thing he has done yet. Helen Jerome Eddy gave her usual good performance.

Franklin's nearest approach to a mistake in Quality Street was when he showed several scenes of Napoleon's army. Those scenes were entirely foreign to the atmosphere of the picture and should not have been put in. It was a rather too obvious way of spending money. Anyway for some unknown reason, the appearance of Napoleon on the screen seems to draw a lot of laughs. Those laughs broke up the serious impression the scene was supposed to convey. Outside of that scene, Franklin's direction was perfect. There were several scenes of dancing that were excellent.

The whole picture was practically perfect. There were good comedy touches, and the titles were well done, as was the acting. The direction has already been mentioned.

THE STAGE

By DOROTHY HARRISON

BOUT ten or twelve years ago, I saw the Chauve-Souris in London and although, of course, the programme is not exactly the same, basically there is very little difference. It would be very difficult to find anything more varied, for in the course of its twenty numbers Balieff carries you through every dramatic phase from deep pathos to comedy, (to which he contributes a great deal with his announcements), but in all the scenes there is the same striking beauty. To my mind the delicacy of An Eight-eenth Century Fan and Porceleine de Copenhagen carry away the chief honors, the pastel effect of the set-tings and costumes fitting the grace of the action perfectly. Then again, the action perfectly. Then again, Souvenir of the Far Past is exquisite in its pathetic sentiment and is beautifully interpreted by Mme. Deykarhanova and M. Gorodetsky. much can not be said for the lighting, the scenery nor yet for the choice of the artists, all of whom possess excellent voices, and, moreover, some of the feminine members of the cast are more than ordinarily pretty. When one considers that the scenery consists mainly of a change of backdrops and the re-arrangement of curtains, rather in the original Shakespearean manner, one realizes the art of their use, for they give the impression of the most elaborately built settings. Altogether the Chauve-Souris will give you something to think about, because it is totally different to anything ever produced by any other "Stage-Autocrat".

RTHUR F. SMITH has improved A the appearance of the Los Angeles Playhouse greatly by his scheme of redecoration. I was never fond of that particular theatre because of its air of austerity, and the Venetian curtain positively hurt one's eyes. The proscenium arch can never be beautiful for the reason that it is too angular, but the green curtains that Mr. Smith has used to replace the old atrocity give a restful feeling to the eyes immediately on entering the theatre and leave the mind free to concentrate on the setting within the frame instead of being distracted by the frame itself.

In The Triumphant Bachelor, by Owen Davis, the Playhouse has a gay offering with which to reopen and one that I think will meet with approval from anyone who is not looking for a play with any special depth or meaning. The dialogue is light (perhaps just a litle crude in parts) and amusing. It rather stresses the theme of infidelity and lack of faith between husbands and wives, but as a motif it is one that seems singularly popular

nowadays. Kenneth Harlan has a pleasing stage presence and although on the first night he was distinctly nervous after his long absence from the footlights, he has an ease of manner that should make him a popular stage favorite. The work of Mabel Forest and Phil Tead deserves special mention and the screen should keep an eye on Marion Burns. During the past few months I have seen Mabel Forest in Edward Everett Horton's So This Is Love! and in Edward Clark's Relations, and in every case her work has been consistently good.

T the present time we have so-A journing in Hollywood, a representative of the New Zealand Government in the presence of Miss Bathie Stuart. Miss Stuart, who is making her headquarters at the Mark Twain Hotel, is a very well known stage and screen artiste in her own country and she brings with her a very interesting act entitled A Night in Maoriland in which she gives a spirited rendering of various native greetings and war dances, backed up by a reel of film supplied by her government. Miss Stuart has an unusual personality and in a very few minutes holds her audience completely and enthusiastically enthralled. Since her arrival here a few weeks ago she has been kept busy at private gatherings and the Community Sing and so on. If you want to see something refreshingly different, A Night in Maoriland will fill the bill and keep you well entertained.

ND yet my heart stood still!"

If that has not been ringing in your memory already, it will be after you have seen A Connecticut Yankee. As I write this it is still just a little bit halting, not having quite hit its stride, but I shall be most surprised if it does not catch on. The music is very pretty, some of the lines are extremely clever, even if others are the wisecracks they have been dubbed, and the staging is good. One solitary item will not bear mention-the tights of the men in the chorus. They remind me of nothing so much as the amateur theatricals we used to stage when we were youngsters at home, only worse if anything. They bagged and wrinkled and were blatant cotton. But apart from them it's a good show with some striking lighting effects worked in with en-semble dances and cleverly thought out serpentine effects.

There is not much to mention in the way of story. He gets the girl, the not-very-heavy heavy lady who tried to hold him leaves them to each other and that's all-it's what happens in between that counts. Maurice Kusell plays the hero and also is responsible for the excellent dancing and the general stage management, I believe. Pearl Regay is the girl and Marie Wells the villain of the piece. Leo White plays the part of the mean magician in the best pantomine style, with incantations and magic powders, but is rather outclassed in his wizardry when the hero stages a solar eclipse and foretells events that we know as history. It is a pity that the chief looks of the cast are in the chorus and also that the voices are not wonderful, but one can forgive that with Pearl Regay especially, because she sings with so much sympathy and dances with more than usual grace.

Look out for her dance with a huge ostrich feather fan. That alone is worth a visit. Another good num-ber is given by a boy tap dancer from the chorus with Lindbergh's face, who does a clever imitation of a side drum.

If you want to enjoy yourself, go expecting a cross between musical comedy and pantomine and-My Heart

Stood Still.

VOICES FROM THE WILDERNESS

FROM SYMON GOULD

Dear Mr. Beaton: I have various back numbers sent to me by your business manager and it confirms Mr. Ralph Flint's suggestion to me that your magazine is truly the best voice in the wilderness of films. Not only do I find your judgments honest, but they are penetratingly just. It is a pity that the critics of New York cannot take a leaf from your Spectator and try to model their evaluations along the same lines. Unfortunately, the critical canons of Gotham and in fact all the other cities of the United States have become rigid formulae and their constructive suggestions are rather nil or of a cynical indifference.

Reading your opinions makes one feel more strongly than ever that anyone with an individual and unswerving viewpoint in films must be prepared for hardy way-faring, and therefore more credit is due you for your willingness to go it alone.

I quite agree with you in your conclusions about Sunrise. Some of the episodes to which you object, such as the barber shop interlude, I happen to know were not in the original script. Murnau was either compelled to insert them under the stress of supervisoral arrogance or perhaps they were put in after his work with Sunrise was finished.

Of course, the great contribution of Sunrise, to my mind, is that for the first time a work of cinema art takes rank with some of the finer achievements in letters, music and sculpture. Its very coldness, which is really excessive restraint, gives it a certain hold on the artistic imagination which in more sentimental treatment might have been effaced. Unfortunately, however, the artistic integrity of Sunrise is destroyed by episodic elements which have no place in a work of art unless they partake of humor which is aristophanic, and surely the barber shop episode and the drunken pig gag

belong rather to the Sennett genre. However, I feel that you are correct in drawing a parallel between Seventh Heaven and Sunrise. I agree with you that if Sunrise had the unqualified poignancy of Seventh Heaven with the elimination of some of its shoddy material, it would probably take rank as the greatest film achievement to

Another point which I am glad you deduced is the seeming imposition of the director's ideas on his cast, mechanizing their emotions. The influence of Emil Jannings' acting on Murnau has resulted in turn upon the transition of that influence by Murnau on George O'Brien, so that we have the familiar aspect of the hunched shoulders and laggard spirit of Jannings in the interpretation of O'Brien.

To me, however, the greatest contribution of Sunrise is in the first or second reel where the camera seems to act of its own volition, creating a feeling of deus-ex-machina-I refer to the episode between O'Brien and Livingston in the swampy ground. Essentially, if more of this technique is incorporated by directors, I feel that the art of the camera would accomplish much greater things than it is in the habit of doing, as unfortunately, the average director interposes the Lilliputian imagination on the camera instead of permitting the camera a certain amount of extra-directorial

However, much can be said for or against these ideas. I want to point out emphatically that I feel that the Film Spectator should enjoy a much wider circulation than I believe it does. I feel that there are thousands of people who will relish the idea of seeing the films through your enlightened eyes as it would give them a greater relish in viewing the screen as well as developing a critical faculty amongst a certain type of movie-goer, which unfortunately they do not possess. As I told you, reviews in the newspapers of today, with the exception of perhaps one or two writers, are absolutely valueless. They usually present merely a trifle of negligible prejudices instead of something tangibly constructed or stimulating, and some day I am sure a new school of critical aesthetics will be evolved for the screen which will make the stuff we get today seem very shallow indeed.

SYMON GOULD, Executive Director, Film Arts Guild, New York.

THE FIRST RESPONSE

Dear Mr. Beaton:

In the January 7th number of The Spectator you offered a couple of gold medals: one for the most original love scene and one for the most unusual fade-out on the screen during 1928.

Well, here's the first nibble, in other words, an indication that you will, ere long, have your hopes realized—unless

I miss my guess.

Recently I read a story that still awaits the awakening of the discrim-

inating producer who will reach out and seize this particular opportunity "by the forelock"—or, is it Opportunity that has this useful commodity? However, though still in manuscript form, the translation to the screen of Driftwood—a screen story by Ada McQuillin and Gladys Gordon, based on the Munsey Magazine short story, The Harbor of Dead Ships, by Belle Burns Gromer—is as certain sure as the presidential election of 1928.

Mainly the story offers a wonderful opportunity for intense dramatic characterization for a male star more than one of whom has made public his crying need for just such a role
—yet the love interest, vital where it has been written in, is so poignant as to touch the heartstrings of the most hardened critic.

Since its production and preview are in the future (not too distant, let us hope), it would hardly be fair to divulge the full plot of the story. Suffice it to say here and now that when Driftwood has passed successfully through the hands of a sympathetic continuity writer into those of a capable director and its leading role has been interpreted by the right star, from fade-in to unusual fade-out it will satisfy those who, like yourself, are looking for something different on the motion picture screen. It will send 🧔 its audiences away walking on inflated pedal extremities and—find itself among the "ten best films of the month".

So polish up those gold medals, Mr. Beaton, and—live in hopes! A STUDIO EDITOR.

P. S.—Since writing the above, I've read your January 21 issue of The Spectator; and your warning that the medal will NOT be won "by a director who winds up in a clinch", only brings from me the hearty retort: The bet's still on!

A REPLY TO MR. SNOW

Dear Mr. Beaton:

Is Mr. Fred X. Snow indulging in irony? In any business, outside of pictures, I should know that he was taking a pleasant jab at the practice of judging the value of the product by the size of the name and the salary of the producer. In pictures one may not be certain.

Would it not be a good thing for Mr. Thomson to display his "authority" for some of the startling things in his story?

What is his authority for using revenge for an injury to the mother as a motivation?

What is his authority for putting the injury to the mother as during the war, in point of time?

What is his authority for charging Union soldiers with the throwing of the bomb?

What is his authority for the costumes of Quantrill's men?

What is his authority for Jesse James' courtship?

What is his authority for making Jesse James and his wife meet as strangers in a swimming hole?

What is his authority for Ford's character? His fancy costume? His social position?

What is his authority for the set the party was held on?

What is his authority for making Federals and Confederates meet in

friendship so soon after the war? What, OH, WHAT, is his authority for making Jesse James known by sight to the constabulary?

What is his authority for Jesse James' bravado?

What is his authority for the fancy

style of the holdups?

What is his authority for Jesse

James having such a horse?

Jesse James' father and my grandfather were both Baptist preachers in Western Missouri. They knew each other. They held meetings together.

My father was wounded at the battle of Lone Jack, and Coole Younger saved his life. And Jesse James took word to my mother's brother, who was serving with Joe Shelby.

After the war, Jesse James and Frank James were often given refuge in my father's house, as they were in

many Southern homes.

As a child I heard Frank James and scores of men who fought in Western Missouri tell stories around the fireplaces.

I have read many books about the James boys and their associates; about Joe Shelby; about Sterling Price; about John Brown and others of that

Now-I may be wrong, but it appears to me:

That every character in the picture is wrong.

That the costumes are wrong.

That the sets are wrong.

That the action and incident are wrong.

If the picture had not been named Jesse James, I should not have sus-pected that it was intended for his life.

If Mr. Thomson has authority for his story, he will make a valuable contribution to history by producing it.

HORACE WILLIAMS.

NOBODY AT ALL

Dear Mr. Beaton: In reply to S. T. Hankey's open question in a recent Spectator, "Who is Cedric Belfrage?", may I be permitted the pleasure of saying that I am absolutely nobody at all. It is very gratifying, however, to learn that somebody takes as much interest as does Mr. Hankey.

I hold no brief to attack the private morals of British directors. If their morals were any worse than their pic-tures the task would be beyond my

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power, and in any event I do not care to tackle it. I am aware that nobody who has not actually been engaged in the picture business in England could believe that it is as puerile as I endeavored to point out. But I am sure that if Mr. Hankey asked the opinion of any recent arrival here from British studios he would have my remarks endorsed. Several prominent actors here who used to perform in England expressed their hearty agreement with me after the article appeared, and regretted that it was impossible for me to write in similar strain in English publications.

As for Mons, which Mr. Hankey mentions, I consider it to be a faithful document but one which, ignoring altogether as it does the personal element of the battle, makes utterly tedious entertainment for all save Union Jack maniacs, from whom all of its considerable profits were derived. I'm afraid I have not seen Guns of Loos.

CEDRIC BELFRAGE.

MORE PRIZES

Dear Editor:

I noticed you have offered in 1928 two prizes for notable achievement in the field of motion picture making. Allow me to augment your list of

My waste-basket full of calendarpads and a couple of boisterous huz-

1. To the first scenarist giving evidence he knows that there are colleges other than co-educational.

2. To the first newsreel editor sending forth a week's roll of cellu-loid NOT containing ANY seemingly unending and meaningless shots of airplanes aloft.

3. To the first director who gives us a Parisian hotel without a revolv-

ing door.

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4. To anybody who fires Clara Bow's make-up kalsominer. GEORGE PAMPEL, Seattle, Wash.

FOOTBALL

Dear Sir:

In your issue of January 7, 1928, and in the criticism of The Fair Co-Ed you realize the need of showing an interesting football game on the screen. The same thought has screen. occurred to me many times and I would like to offer a suggestion.

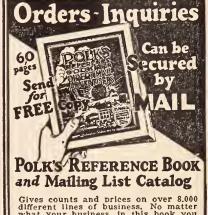
Nearly all football shots are practically close-ups. No spectator, at the game, is ever closer than fifty to one hundred feet to the players. Why, then, should not the camera be the same distance away? With a larger lens the whole thing could be brought out; at the same time the "pam" would, naturally, be much slower. Why not let the camera see the picture as an ordinary spectator would see it? At least, it would be worth a trial.

ALLEN F. CURLETT, JR., Wilmington, Delaware.

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